STUDIES IN DRAMATISTS

Vol. III



SHAKESPEARE'S GENERAL

B. R. MULLIK

S. CHAND & CO.
DELHI—NEW DELHI—BOMBAY
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STUDIES IN DRAMATISTS

FOR

M.A. & B.A. Students of English Literature in Indian Universities

Vol. III

SHAKESPEARE
GENERAL

By

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Fourth Edition
(Revised & Enlarged)

1963
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FOREWORD

I have known Dr. B. R. Mullik for several years as one genuinely interested in English literature. His STUDIES IN POETS and STUDIES IN DRAMATISTS are evidence of his interest and understanding. These small volumes are well written and show an appreciative understanding of various aspects of the work of the Poets and Dramatists dealt with. These books will be of great service to young students of English literature in helping them to a better appreciation of these writers. Up to now, Dr. Mullik has written on only a few poets and dramatists, but I am glad to know that he expects to continue the series. I congratulate him on the work he is doing.

Senate House,
Agra University.
Agra, Oct. 25th, 1955.

C. V. MAHAJAN,
M.A. (Oxon.), Lt-Col., M.L.A.,
Vice-Chancellor, Agra University.

PREFACE TO THE FOURTH EDITION

In this edition the monograph has been thoroughly revised and enlarged.

June, 1963.

B. R. MULLIK.

PREFACE TO THE SECOND EDITION

Nothing can give a greater pleasure to an author than the fact that his book has been appreciated by those for whom it is meant. That a second edition is being brought out within less than a year of the first to meet the growing demand of the students from all over the country abundantly proves that it has served the purpose for which it was written.

Except for a brief introduction and a few additions, no changes have been made in this edition.

The author expresses his deep sense of gratitude to Lt.-Col. C. V. Mahajan, M.A. (Oxon.), Vice-Chancellor, Agra University, for very kindly writing the Foreword to these monographs, and to those scholars who have obliged him by sending their opinions and suggestions for improvement. He also acknowledges with thanks the unsolicited letters of appreciations sent by other readers.

January, 1957.

B. R. MULLIK.

PREFACE TO THE FIRST EDITION

Having been encouraged by the warm reception accorded to my first series—'STUDIES IN POETS'—I have great pleasure in placing in the hands of the students of English literature in India, my second series—'STUDIES IN DRAMATISTS'.

As a teacher connected with post-graduate and under-graduate teaching of English, and also valuing answer-books for a number of years, I have found the Indian student of English literature, having to complete an elaborate course of studies within about twenty months, and often without good library facilities and tutorial guidance, unable to adjust his answers to the exact requirements of the questions. He may know the matter, but he may be unable to present it properly. Often he does not understand the scope of the subject he is studying. The monographs have been prepared to assist him in the solution of these difficulties.

In these monographs the author has dealt with such topics of general interest about which students have to be particularly concerned. The intelligent student will notice that for any major writer there are certain topics centring round which questions may be asked in different forms and in different languages; the difference is, however, only apparent. Basically all the various questions can be classified under a manageable number of topics. The purpose of these monographs is to present critical and analytical essays on these basic topics. Students are recommended to consider the questions collected from various universities at the end and if they do so, they will realise the validity of my statement about the limited number of basic topics. For those who desire to pursue the critical study of a topic further, the selected bibliography should prove useful.

I will be failing in my duty if I do not express my most grateful thanks to Prof. Dewan Chand Sharma, M. P., Head of the English Dept., Punjab University; Dr. A. Bose, D. Phil. (Oxon.), Head of the English Dept., Muslim University, Aligarh; Dr. Birjadish Prashad, D. Phil., Head of the English Dept., Agra College, Agra; and Prof. J. Dorab, Prof. of English, St. John's College, Agra, who have encouraged me in this undertaking, and who have given me some very valuable suggestions for making these volumes really useful to the students in every way.

AGRA,
January, 1956. B. R. MULLIK.

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SHAKESPEARE

(1564—1616)

INTRODUCTION.

Shakespeare was the greatest of all Elizabethan dramatists, and he holds the highest place among the English writers. As we do not know much about his life, and it is certain that he did not have proper training and education as other dramatists of the period had, his stupendous achievements are an enigma to all scholars up to the present day. It is still a mystery how a country boy, poor and uneducated, who came to London in search of odd jobs to scrape a living, could reach such heights in dramatic literature. Referring to this Long has observed in *English Literature*: "One who reads a few of Shakespeare's great plays and then the meager story of his life is generally filled with vague wonder. Here is an unknown country boy, poor and poorly educated according to the standards of his age, who arrives at the great city of London and goes to work at odd jobs in a theatre. In a year or two he is associated with scholars and dramatists, the masters of their age, writing plays of kings and clowns, of gentlemen and heroes and noble women, all of whose lives he seems to know by intimate association. In a few years more he leads all that brilliant group of poets and dramatists who have given undying glory to the Age of Elizabeth. Play after play from his pen, mighty dramas of human life and character following one another so rapidly that good work seems impossible; yet they stand the test of time and their poetry is still unrivalled in any language. For all this great work the author apparently cares little since he makes no attempt to collect or preserve his writings. A thousand scholars have ever since been busy collecting, identifying, classifying the works which this magnificent workman tossed aside so carelessly when he abandoned the drama and retired to his native village. He has a marvellously imaginative and creative find; but he invents few, if any, new plots or stories. He simply takes an

old play or an old poem, makes it over quickly and lo! this old familiar material glows with the deepest thoughts and the tenderest feelings that ennoble our humanity; and each new generation of men finds it more wonderful than the last. How did he do it? That is still an unanswered question and the source of our wonder.

"There are, in general, two theories to account for Shakespeare. The romantic school of writers have always held that in him all came from within; that his genius was his sufficient guide; and that to the overmastering power of his genius alone we owe all his great works. Practical unimaginative men, on the other hand, assert that in Shakespeare all came from without, and that we must study his environment rather than his genius, if we are to understand him. He lived in a play-loving age; he studied the crowds, gave them what they wanted and simply reflected their own thoughts and feelings. In reflecting the English crowd about him he unconsciously reflected all crowds which are alike in all ages; hence his continued popularity. And in being guided by public sentiment he was not singular, but followed the plain path that every good dramatist has always followed to success.

"Probably the truth of the matter is to be found somewhere between these two extremes. Of his great genius there can be no question; but there are other things to consider. As we have already noticed, Shakespeare was trained, like his fellow workmen, first as an actor, second as a reviser of old plays, and last as an independent dramatist. He worked with other playwrights and learned their secret. Like them, he studied and followed the public taste, and his work indicates at least three stages, from his first somewhat crude experiments to his finished masterpieces. So it would seem that in Shakespeare we have the result of hard work and of orderly human development, quite as much as of transcendent genius."

Referring to the life and works of William Shakespeare Hudson has observed in *An Outline History of English Literature*: "William Shakespeare was born on or about the 23rd April 1564 at Stratford on Avon, Warwickshire. He was the son of a prosperous tradesman of the town, who a little later became its High Bailiff or Mayor. Though there is no actual record of the fact, it is practically certain that, like other Stratford boys of his class, he went to the local Grammar School, an excellent institution of its kind, where he was taught Latin and arithmetic.

While he never became a learned man, his few years at school, thus gave him a sound education as far as it went. Financial misfortunes presently overtook his father, and when he was about fourteen, he was taken from school that he might help the family by earning money on his own account. Of the nature of his employment, however, we know nothing. In his 19th year he married Anne Hathaway, a woman eight years senior, the daughter of well-to-do yeoman of the neighbouring village of Shottery. This marriage was hasty and ill-advised and appears to have been unhappy. Three children were born to him.; Susannah and the twins, Judith and Hammet. Tradition says that meanwhile he fell into bad company and that a deer-stealing escapade in the woods of Charlecote Hall obliged him to fly from home. There may or may not be truth in this story—we cannot tell. It is certain that a few years after his marriage, roughly about 1587, he left his native town to seek his fortunes in London. At this time the drama was gaining rapidly in popularity through the work of the University Wits. Shakespeare soon turned to the stage and became first an actor, and then (though without ceasing to be an actor) a playwright. An ill-natured reference to him in a pamphlet, written by Greene on his death-bed, shows that in 1592 he was well-known as a successful author. He remained in London upwards of twenty years after this, working hard, producing on an average a couple of plays a year, and growing steadily in fame and wealth. He became a shareholder in two of the leading theatres of the time, the Globe and the Black Friars, and purchased property in Statford and London. But the years which brought prosperity also brought domestic sorrows. His only son died in 1596; his father in 1601; his mother in 1608. Then between 1610 and 1612 he retired to Statford, where he had brought a house, the largest in the town known as New Palace. His elder daughter had already (1607) married Dr. John Hall, who was physician; on February 10, 1616. Judith became the wife of Thomas Quiney, whose father had been one of the poet's closest friends. By this time Shakespeare's health had broken down completely and he died on the 23rd April of that year.

"Shakespeare's biography proves conclusively that, like Chaucer, he was no dreamer, but a practical man of affairs. He reached London poor and friendless; he left it rich and respected; and his fortunes were the work of his own hand. Much light is thus thrown not only upon his personal character, but also upon his writings, in which great powers of creative

imagination are combined with, and supported by, a wonderful feeling for reality, sound commonsense, and large and varied familiarity with the world. Of the learning which is shown in his plays, and about which so much has been written, it is enough here to say that it is not the learning of the trained and accurate scholar—of a Bacon or a Ben Jonson; but rather the wide miscellaneous knowledge of many things, which was naturally accumulated by an extraordinarily assimilative mind during years of contact with men and books at a time when all social intercourse and all literature were alike saturated with the classicism of the Renaissance. Translations gave him easy access to the treasure of ancient literature; the intellectual atmosphere of the environment in which he lived and worked was charged with new ideas, and was immensely stimulating; and Shakespeare was preeminently endowed with the happy faculty of turning everything that came to him to the best possible account.

"**Shakespeare's Works.** A few miscellaneous and doubtfull pieces omitted, Shakespeare's non-dramatic poetry consists of two narrative poems, *Venus and Adonis* and *Lucrece*, in both of which the classicism of the age is very marked and a sequence of 154 sonnets, the first 126 addressed to a man, the remainder addressed or referring to a woman. These sonnets have given rise to endless discussion, and everything about them remains obscure. They purport to record a passionate history of disastrous love and broken friendship, but we cannot even be sure whether they deal with real or with imaginary things. The only certainty is that they contain in places the finest lyrical poetry of their time.

"The commonly accepted canon of Shakespeare's dramatic work comprises 37 plays, though the authenticity of several of these is doubtful, and in some cases at least it is clear that his part in the dramas attributed to him was limited to the retouching of older material. His activity as writer for the stage extended over some 24 years beginning about 1588 and ending about 1612, and we may therefore say, in general terms, that 12 years of it belonged to the sixteenth and 12 to the seventeenth century. Shakespeare's critics have agreed to subdivide these 24 years into four periods, and by arranging the plays within these periods as nearly as possible in their order of production, we are able to follow the evolution of his genius and art, and the remarkable changes which came over his thought and style. I will therefore give the names of his plays,

approximately in their chronological sequence, indicating the specific characteristics of spirit and technique by which the work of each period is marked.

"(*i*) 1588—93. Period of early and, to a large extent, experimental works. Shakespeare's apprenticeship begins with the revision of old plays, such as the three parts of *Henry VI* and *Titus Andronicus*. To this period belong his first comedies in which the influence of Lyly is pronounced—*Loves' Labour Lost*, *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*, *The Comedy of Errors* and *A Midsummer Night's Dream*; his first effort in chronicle drama, distinctly reminiscent of Marlowe, *Richard III*; and a single very youthful tragedy, *Romeo and Juliet*. The work of this period as a whole is extremely slight in texture; the treatment of life in it is superficial; there is little depth of thought or characterisation; and the art is markedly immature. The prominence of rime in the dialogue, the stiffness of the blank verse, and the constant use of puns, conceits, and other affections, are among its outstanding technical features.

"(*ii*) 1594—1600. Period of the great comedies and chronicle plays. The works of this period are: *Richard II*, *King John*, *The Merchant of Venice*, *Henry IV*, *Parts I and II*, *Henry V*, *The Taming of the Shrew*, *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, *Much Ado About Nothing*, *As You Like It* and *Twelfth Night*, Shakespeare now leaves behind him the influence of his early masters; his work becomes independent, and reveals immense development in power and technique. It is far more massive in quality, the knowledge of the world and of the motives and passions of men which it everywhere exhibits is infinitely more profound. The characterisation and the humour have become deep and penetrative, and there is great growth in the weight of thought. Shakespeare has also outgrown, or is fast outgrowing, the immaturities of his former style. The youthful crudeness, extravagance, and strain are disappearing; rime is largely abandoned for prose and blank verse, and the blank verse itself has lost its stiffness, and is free and flexible.

"(*iii*) 1601—08. Period of the great tragedies and of the sombre or bitter comedies. In this period all Shakespeare's powers—his dramatic power, his intellectual power and his power of expression—are at their highest. This is the time of his supreme masterpieces. But attention is pre-occupied, to the total exclusion of all other things, with the darker side of human experience, and his plays are made out of those destructive

passions which shake the foundations of the moral order and bring ruin upon innocent and guilty alike. The sins and weaknesses of men form the staple of his plots and even when he writes what are theoretically distinguished as comedies, the emphasis is still thrown on evil and the tone is either grave or fierce. The plays of this period are : *Julius Caesar, Hamlet, All's Well that Ends Well, Measure for Measure, Troilus and Cressida, Othello, King Lear, Macbeth, Antony and Cleopatra, Coriolanus*, and *Timon of Athens*.

"(*iv*) 1608—12. Period of the later comedies or Dramatic Romances. Again we note a sudden and singular change in the temper of Shakespeare's work. It is as if the heavy clouds which had long hung over the fictitious world of his imagination now roll away, and the sky grows clear towards sunset. In these last plays the ground work is still furnished by tragic passion but the evil is no longer permitted to have its way, but is controlled and conquered by the good. A very tender and gracious tone prevails in them throughout. At the same time they show very fully the decline of Shakespeare's dramatic powers. They are often careless in construction and unsatisfactory in characterisation, while in style and versification they will not bear comparison with the work of the preceding ten years. Three plays, entirely Shakespeare's, belong to this period—*Cymbeline, The Tempest*, and *The Winter's Tale*. To these we have to add two which are only partly his—*Pericles* and *Henry VIII*. The latter was completed by his younger contemporary and friend, Fletcher."

1. SHAKESPEARE, THE MAN·

Regarding Shakespeare the man, we know very little from his biographical records, which are scarce. But their absence is not greatly to be deplored, because the life of an artist survives not in his biography, but in the products of his art. Thus in order to understand the personality of Shakespeare, we have to go to his plays. How far can we find Shakespeare's real self in his plays is still a debatable question. Raleigh who believes that "the rapid, alert reading of one of the great plays brings us nearer to the heart of Shakespeare than all the faithful and laudable business of the antiquary and the commentator", has answered this question thus:

"But here we are met by an objection which is strong in popular favour and has received some measure of scholarly support. It is denied that we can find the man Shakespeare in

his plays. He is a dramatic poet; and poetry, the clown says, is feigning. His enormous rich creative faculty has given us a long procession of fictitious persons who are as real to us as our neighbours; a large assembly, including the most diverse characters—Hamlet and Falstaff, Othello and Thersites, Imogen, and Mrs. Quickly, Dogberry and Julius Caesar, Cleopatra and Audrey—and in this crowd the dramatist conceals himself and escapes. We cannot make him answerable for anything that he says. He is the fellow in the cellarage, who urges on the action of the play, but is himself invisible.

"It is a plausible objection, and a notable tribute to Shakespeare's success in producing the illusions which are the machinery of his art. But it would never be entertained by an artist, and would have had short shrift from any of the company that assembled at the Mermaid Tavern. No man can walk abroad save on his own shadow. No dramatist can create live characters save by bequeathing the best of himself to the children of his art, scattering among them a largesse of his own qualities, giving, it may be, to one his wit, to another his philosophic doubt, to another his love of action, to another the simplicity and constancy that he finds deep in his own nature. There is no thrill of feeling communicated from the printed page but has first been alive in the mind of the author: there was nothing alive in his mind that was not intensely and sincerely felt. Plays like those of Shakespeare cannot be written in cold blood; they call forth the man's whole energies, and take toll of the last farthing of his wealth of sympathy and experience. In the plays we may learn what are the questions that interest Shakespeare most profoundly and recur to his mind with most insistence; we may note how he handles his story, what he rejects, and what he alters, changing its purport and fashion; how many points he is content to leave dark; what matters he chooses to decorate with the highest resources of his romantic art, and what he gives over to the sport of triumphant ridicule; how in every type of character he emphasises what most appeals to his instinct and imagination, so that we see the meaning of character more plainly than it is to be seen in life. We share in the emotions that are aroused in him by certain situations and events; we are made to respond to the strange imaginative appeal of certain others; we know, more clearly than if we had heard it uttered, the verdict that he passes on certain characters and certain kinds of conduct. He has made us acquainted with all that he sees and all that he feels, he has spread out before us the

scroll that contains his interpretation of the word—how dare we complain that he has hidden himself from our knowledge."

From an attentive study of his plays, we find that Shakespeare was endowed with an acute power of observation of all phenomena of life. In this connection Drinkwater writes: "The measure of a poet's mind then is not aptness for philosophic abstraction, but its capacity for receiving vivid impressions of a great variety of phenomena, impressing upon which his art will work in the creation of his poetry. In this capacity Shakespeare's mind was probably the most richly endowed that the world has known.

"Nothing escaped that burning gaze, that intent contemplation. The features of every phenomenon that he encountered were registered in his mind with matchless fidelity. Habits, character, countenance, costume, landscape, emotions, seasonal changes, state affairs, events witnessed, reports heard and chronicle read, traffic in the streets and stars in the heavens, misery and pomp and vice and honour, health and sickness, vigour, frailty, stenches, and sweet smells, cunning and pity, birds and animals and games—every shape and condition and element of his eager daily experience became a fixed and glowing image in his mind for use as his art should require. There they underwent infinite scrutiny and permutation, one illuminating another, the material of life shaping slowly, yet with untold fertility, towards the strictly organised purposes of art. Shakespeare in this did as other poets do, but he excelled them all at once in the lavishness and the precision with which the images were recorded."

Shakespeare, the lover of human drama, loved Nature no less. Regarding this characteristic of his Raleigh writes: "In Shakespeare's day the forest of Arden, stretching away to the north of the river, was more than a name; and much of his boy-hood was spent in that best of schools, a wild and various country.... He must have wandered for whole days and nights about the countryside, and was delicately sensitive to all the shifting aspects of the pageant of Nature, to Spring and Autumn, dawn and sunset, wind and cloud. His plays abound in passages which bear all the marks of detailed reminiscence. In *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, Titania describes a summer of tempest and flood which has drowned the low-lying lands near the river:

> The ox hath therefore stretch'd his yoke in vain
> The ploughman lost his sweat, and the green corn

Hath rotted, ere his youth attain'd a beard;
The fold stands empty in the drowned field ;
And crows are fatted with the murrion flock;
The Nine men's morris is fill'd up with mud,
And the quaint mazes in the wanton green
For lack of tread are undistinguishable.

His memories of Nature, of 'the uncertain glory of an April day,' of the sun 'gliding pale stream with heavenly alchemy,' of the 'ugly rack of clouds that steal across his face,' of the 'canker in the fragrant rose,' and of the 'ruin of autumn.'

When yellow leaves, or none, or few, do hang.
Upon those boughs which shake against the cold,

—all these things are utterly unlike the laborious notes of descriptive writer; they have put on immortality in metaphor, and come readily to hand because they are a part of his own life, and have been taught to speak the language of his own thought.

"To a lover of human drama, the moving incidents of life in the country, and the excitement of sports and the chase, must have been full of interest. There can be no doubt that Shakespeare was minutely acquainted with all the lore of field-sports,—the hunt of the hare and the stag, and the capture of smaller game by the falcon. In *Romeo and Juliet*, Juliet in her beautiful invocation to Night, the quick flushing of her cheeks, as she waits for the sun to set, suggests a whole parable of hawking, and of taming, or 'manning', wild hawks, as they 'bate' or flutter on the perch, by the use of a velvet hood:

Hood my unmann'd blood, bating in my cheeks,
With thy black mantle; till strange love, grown bold,
Think true love acted simple modesty.

"There is no play of Shakespeare's without some of these allusions, and he is as familiar with the points of a horse and the hinds and qualities of hounds and deer as with the forgotten science of falcony. But it would seem that some part, at least, of his knowledge is the knowledge of an onlooker rather than a huntsman. He is true here to his own wide sympathy, and' cannot forget the quarry in the chase...Two of his most wonderful pictures are, first, the description, in *As You Like It*, of the anguish of the sequestered stage, wounded by the hunters; and yet more vivid, the picture drawn in *Venus and Adonis* of poor Wat, the hare, standing erect, in a position of apprehension, listening for the distant cry of the bounds.

"As for Natural History in the modern sense, Shakespeare knew little about it, and cared even less. The social life of the

humbler creatures did not engage his attention. It has been truly said that he was 'curiously unobservant of animated Nature.' The habits of birds and beasts and fishes seem to come immediately under his eye only when they touch the daily interests of average humanity. When he wants an illustration from animal life for the figurative exposition of his thought, he is content, as often as not, to make use of the commodious lies of picturesque tradition."

Regarding Shakespeare's learning Raleigh writes: "He was a child of the English Renaissance, and it was the books of his own age that first caught him in their toils. Even Chaucer, who never lost popularity, lost esteem with the younger generation of Elizabethans, and suffered from imputation of rusticity. But the translations and imitations of the classics which poured from the press during the second half of the century, the poems and love pamphlets and plays of the University with the tracts and dialogues in the prevailing Italian taste—all these were the making of the new age and the favourable reading of Shakespeare, who can hardly have become intimate with them until he first set foot in London. He was no bibliophile, though he gives utterance, with curious frequency, to the opinion that a good book should have a good binding. He read the works of his contemporaries as they appeared. Marlowe, his master in the drama, he has honoured in the most unusual fashion by direct quotation:

> Dead shepherd, now I find thy saw of might:
> 'Who ever loved that loved not at first sight?'

From Greene's story of Dorastus and Fawnia he took the plot of *The Winter's Tale*; and it is permissible to think that he commemorated the unhappy life and early death of Greene, who died reviling him, in those lines of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* which describe:

> The thrice three Muses, mourning for the death
> Of learning late deceas'd in beggary.

On Thomas Longe's novel *Rosylynde* he based his play of *As You Like it*. He read *Euphues*, of course; borrowed from it, and in *Henry IV*, ridiculed its affectations. He read Sindey's *Arcadia*, and perhaps took from it the underplot of Gloucester and his sons in *King Lear*. And apart from these famous instances there is hardly a pamphlet, in that age of pamphlets, which the student can read in the certainty that Shakespeare has not been before him. The names of devils in the *King Lear* seem to be borrowed from an obscure Protes-

tant tract, of 1603, called *A Declaration of Egregious Popish Impositure*. The arguments of Shylock, in his speeches before the Duke, have been supposed to owe something to Silvayn's *Orator*, a book of declamations translated in 1596 from the French; while a very close parallel to Portia's reply has been found in the prose of Seneca. These are instances which might be multiplied a hundredfold, and although few are certain cases of debt, their cumulative effect is irresistible. Shakespeare was one of those swift and masterly readers who know what they want of a book; they scorn nothing that is dressed in print, but turn over the pages with a quick discernment of all that brings them new information, or jumps with their thought or tickles their fancy. Such a reader will perhaps have done with a volume in a few minutes, yet what he has taken from it he keeps for years. He is a live man; and is sometimes wrongly judged by slower wits to be a learned man.

"Among the publications of his own age, some few stand out pre-eminent as books that were of more than passing interest to Shakespeare, books that he ransacked from cover to cover for the material of his plays. The books that served him best for his dramatic plots were Raphael Holinshed's *Chronicles*, Sir Thomas North's translation of Plutarch's *Lives*, and the Italian Novelists, in many translations, chief among which must be reckoned Painter's *Palace of Pleasure*, containing a selection of the choicest novels of great Italian masters. These books, one would say, he must have owned. The novelists supplied him, either directly, or through the medium of some earlier plays, with much of the material of his comedy. From Holinshed he took substance of his English historical plays; and his study of the book acquainted him also with those British legends which he transfigured in *King Lear*, *Macbeth*, and *Cymbeline*. The Italian novels and the English chronicle history cannot compare, in the world's literature, with the thrice renowned *Lives* of Plutarch, yet all three were worthy to be read and studied by Shakespeare."

Regarding Shakespeare's personality Wilson writes in his book, *The Essential Shakespeare*: "He must have been a very fascinating person to meet. His manners were charming, while in respect of looks and conversation a good tradition which comes from the son of one of his fellow-players pictures us a handsome, well-shaped man, very good company, and of a very ready and pleasant smooth wit. A handsome poet with a ready wit, a poet who is good company, a poet who can turn the

laugh upon himself, who can class poets with lunatics and frantic lovers, who write

> The poet's eye in a fine frenzy rolling,
> Doth glance from heaven to earth, from earth
> To heaven.

and then go on divinely

> And as imagination bodies forth
> The forms of things unknown, the poet's pen
> Turns them to shapes and gives to airy nothing
> A local habitation and a name—

such a poet was surely one of the most delightful companions the world has ever known. Every scrap of contemporary evidence points in this direction. There are stories, true or false, of unedifying escapades, but of his person the tide of epithets flows one way only: 'gentle', 'friendly', 'civil', 'brave' (that is, gallant), 'dear-loved', and always affectionately 'our Shakespeare' or 'my Shakespeare', are the phrases that come to men's mind when they mention him. Jonson will fiercely criticise his art, but no sooner does he think of the artist than he cries 'I did love the man this side of idolatory as much as any.'

"Some moderns have conjured from all this an image of a shy effeminate creature, one who is actual life seemed to lack character and personality that he might the more readily absorb the life around him. Could Jonson have loved such a man? Could such a man have begotten Falstaff, or Toby Belch or Mercutio, or Antony Fuller, it is true, wrote forty years after his death, but when he declared 'his genius generally was jocular, inclining him to festivity' the statement has the ring of truth. The man who created the comedies was a good 'mixer' in companies of all sorts, and in merry-making as in other of life's occasions it is more blessed to give than to receive. The silent man is never popular and whatever else the man Shakespeare may have been he was certainly popular. Nor can there have been anything effeminate about him. He was no Tybalt, and despised the duelling fashion as new-fangled, but like other men of the time he wore steel at his side, and could draw if the occasion really warranted. A recent discovery at the Record Office shows us 'a certain loose person of reckoning or value', seeking to protect himself by claiming from the Court of Queen's Bench legal security against Shakespeare and three others 'for fear of death and multilation of his limbs."

Shakespeare was an upright man, who would not unnecessarily flatter others. In this connection Wilson writes, "In

that age of fulsome adulation, Shakespeare is a marvel of restraint and self-respect. Almost every play he wrote gave him opportunities of flattering the reigning monarch, and it would have been very much to his interest and to that of his company had he done so. Yet the only reference to Elizabeth is the lovely but almost frigid passage about the 'imperial vot'ress' in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, so cool indeed, that I have sometimes wondered whether there is not just a touch of malice in it. As for James I, Shakespeare pays court to his interests in *Macbeth*, but nowhere does he offer that license of blandishment which the royal nostrils delighted in. In the Sonnets he does not flatter; he writes in love and admiration."

Though Shakespeare, on the whole, was a jolly man, yet it is evident from his tragedies that he must have suffered acutely, and been subjected to melancholy moods. In this connection Drinkwater writes, "Earlier............I have spoken of the happiness that he must have enjoyed during the years of his crowded creation. But it was not a happiness that precluded seasons of deep and melancholy gloom and there is ample evidence in his work that he knew well all that mortal stress could be. It is not a case of seeing in the spiritual life of Hamlet or Lear a direct reflection of his own spirit in travail. It is quite possible for either of these plays to have been written during a time of unclouded personal peace. But through and through the sonnets and the plays, tragedies and comedies alike.....are woven dark threads of suffering for which no impersonal theory can wholly account. The known continuity and abundance of his work between the ages of twenty-seven and forty-seven is sufficient proof that for twenty years at least his prime was remarkable in vigour, and there is certainly nothing to show that he was at any time an ailing man. But whatever the pathological truth may be there can be no doubt that Shakespeare, in the long glory of his invention, suffered many dejected, even despairing moods."

Above all, the most admirable quality of Shakespeare, the man, is his broad humanity. All critics have testified to the generosity, catholicity of temper, and tolerance of Shakespeare. In this connection, Raleigh writes: "Shakespeare was the rarest of all things, whole man. It is only warped and stunted partisans who are unable to see any virtue or truth on the other side. A Catholic who finds no force in the Protestant position, a Protestant who has never felt the fascination of the Catholic ideal,—these are not the best of their kind; and if all were like

them, the strife of party would sink below the level of humanity. They are 'damn'd like an ill-roasted egg, all on one side.' But even among those whose width of sympathy keeps life sweet, there are few indeed who dare court comparison with Shakespeare's utter freedom of thought. He will never buy favour and familiarity with one party at the price of neglecting or miscalling another. He loved the Court, and the country. He believed in authority, and in liberty. He could say, with Troilus—

> I am as true as truth's simplicity,
> And simpler than the infancy of truth ;

and with Autolycus.

> How bless'd are we that are not simple men !

He was at one with Isabella, in *Measure for Measure*, when she gives utterance to the central truth of Christianity:

> Alas, alas!
> Why, all the souls that were, were forfeit once,
> And he that might the vantage best have look,
> Found out the remedy;

and with Gloucester, in *King Lear*, when from the depths of despair he impugns the mercy of heaven:

> As files to wanton boys are we to the Gods :
> They kill us for their sport.

He is, in a word, a seer and a sceptic. There is no contradiction in all this. Large minds are open and wise, where small minds are close and cunning. Those who have never seen more than a little dare not express all their doubts........We look in vain for reticences and partialities in Shakespeare, little devices of shelter and concealment; he will not let us 'nestle into a corner of his mind and think from there'; he keeps us out of doors, and we find the width of his vision fatiguing, the freedom of his movements bewildering. He is at home in the world; and we complain that the place is too large for us, the visitation of the winds too rough and ceremonious.

"The breadth and impartiality of Shakespeare's view of things has been recognised in that great commonplace of criticism which compares him with Nature. The critics say many and various things; but they all say this. On the tablet under his bust in Stratford Church he is called 'Shakespeare, with whom quick Nature died.' Ben Jonson continues and enlarges the comparison:

Nature herself was proud of his designs,
And joy'd to wear the dressing of his lines.

Milton, celebrates his 'native woodnotes wild'. 'He was the man,' says Dryden, 'who of modern, and perhaps ancient poets, had the largest and most comprehensive soul. All the images of Nature were still present to him, and he drew them, not laboriously, but luckily; when he describes anything, you more than see it, you feel it too. Those who accuse him to have wanted learning; give him the greater commendation: he was naturally learned; he needed not the spectacle of books to read nature; he looked inward and found her there.' So the figure is handed on, and is elaborated and heightened. It gives Pope his happiest sentence: 'The poetry of Shakespeare was Inspiration indeed; he is not so much an Imitator, as an Instrument, of Nature; and 'tis not so just to say that he speaks from her, as that she speaks thro' him.' Jonson repeats the same theme. 'Shakespeare is above all writers, at least above all modern writers, the poet of nature; the poet that holds up to his readers a faithful mirror of manners and of life.' To these formal verdicts must be added all that wealth of metaphor which is spent on the effort to rise to the occasion: Shakespeare's irregularities, says Pope, are like the irregularities of 'an ancient majestic piece of Gothic Architecture, compared with a neat Modern building'; his work, says Johnson, differs from that of more correct writers as a forest differs from a garden; his laugh, says Meredith, is 'broad as ten thousand beeves at pasture.' Nothing less than the visible world, in all its most various and imposing aspect, is accepted as a synonym for Shakespeare".

This broad humanity and a spirit of tolerance helped Shakespeare in keeping the tragic balance between pitiless observation and divine compassion and understanding, which is exemplified in his portrayal of the character of Shylock. He hides nothing. He shows us everything of Shylock's meanness, cunning and cruelty—vices which he himself detested above all vices—and notwithstanding he compels the best of us, to cry out upon the Jew's exit, "By heaven, the man is wronged!"

Lastly, Shakespeare combined in himself two opposite and contradictory characteristics—his clear-eyed sagacity and sanity, on the one hand, and on the other, his impassioned imagination. In this connection Minto writes in his book, *Characteristics of English Poets*: "One of the most curious traits in Shakespeare's character is his worldly wisdom. I do not allude to what is

called the wisdom of Shakespeare, as displayed in his maxims of morality and politics. I mean the commonplace virtue, rarely exhibited by men of genius, of prudently expending the material rewards of their toil. We are indebted to the antiquaries for the illustration of this. Not only have they shown us how he invested large savings in his native town, but by ransacking corporation records and other public archives they discovered for us how firmly he looked after his property. We find him in 1604 prosecuting one Rogers who had bought malt from him and failed to pay. We find him in 1608 bringing an action against John Addenbroke for recovery of a small debt, and thereafter, on the flight of the debtor, proceeding against the security. In 1612 we find him conjoined in a petition to the Court of Chancery to compel certain sharers in the farming of the tithes to pay their just proportion of a common burden. In 1614 he took measures to resist the proposed enclosure of certain common lands which would have affected the value of his property. These little items are not without an interest: they are small in themselves, but they suggest a good deal. The hardships of Shakespeare's early days, the misfortunes of his father, had taught him prudence: he was evidently a firm man of business, not to be imposed upon or cheated with impunity.

"This combination of sure and firmest prudence with heaven-climbing genius is the fundamental wonder in Shakespeare, the permanent marvel of his constitution. From whatever point we look at him, this wonder emerges. With all his capricious streamers of fancy, he does not gyrate off into aimless oddity and eccentricity. The torrent, tempest, and whirlwind of impassioned imagination is in him controlled by a temperance that pulls it back from the raving frenzy of incontinent riot. He is copiously inventive and original, but he does not vex, strain, and dislocate his faculty by striving after plots, characters, maxims, words, and images that had never before been seen in print, or heard upon the stage. Large, steadfast, cleareyed sagacity and sanity are everywhere conspicuous in Shakespeare."

It can be surmised that these two opposing qualities—worldly wisdom and impassioned imagination must have at times come into conflict in the mind of Shakespeare, as this conflict is a theme of his greatest play. In this connection, Raleigh has observed in his book, *Shakespeare*: "His character was not all of a piece, neat and harmonious and symmetrical. The tragic conflicts which are the themes of his greatest plays were

projected by him from the intestinal warfare and insurrections of the kingdom of his mind. One such civil strife is pre-eminent among the rest, and has left its traces deep on his poetry. It is not the world-old struggle between reason and affection, between the counsels of passion and the cool dictates of prudence; although that struggle is wonderfully illustrated in many of the plays, and equal justice is done to both parties. But the central drama of his mind is the tragedy of the life of imagination. He was the lover of clear decisive action, and of the deed done. He knew and condemned the sentiment which fondly nurses itself and is without issue. Yet, on the other hand, the gift of imagination with which he was so richly dowered, the wide, restless, curious searchings of the intelligence and the sympathies—these faculties, strong in him by nature, and strengthened every day by the exercise of his profession, bade fare at times to take sole possession, and to paralyse the will. Then he revolted against himself, and was almost inclined to bless, that dark, disfeatured messenger called the angel of this life, 'whose care is lest men see too much at once.' If for the outlook of a God the seer must neglect the opportunities and duties of a man, may not the price paid be too high? It is a dilemma known to all poets,—to all men, indeed, who live the exhausting life of the imagination, and grapple hour by hour, in solitude and silence, with the creatures of their mind, while the passing invitations of humanity, which never recur, are ignored or repelled. Keats knew the position well, and has commented on it, though not tragically, in some passages of his letters. 'Men of genius,' he says, 'are great as certain ethereal chemical operating on the mass of neutral intellect—but they have not any individuality, and determined character.' And again: 'A poet is the most unpoetical of anything in existence, because he has no identity—he is continually in for and filling some other body.' Keats also recognised, as well as Shakespeare, that man cannot escape the call to action, and it was he who said, 'I am convinced more and more, every day that fine writing is, next to fine doing, the top thing in the world'. But what if this highest call come suddenly, as it always does, and find the man unnerved and unready, given over to 'sensations and day-nightmares,' absorbed in speculation, out of himself, and unable to respond? A famous English painter was once, at his own request, bound to the mast during a storm at sea in order that he might study the pictorial effects of sky and water. His help was not wanted in the working of the ship; he was

not one of the crew. Who among men, in the conduct of his own life, dare claim a like exception?

"Shakespeare certainly made no such claim; but he knew the anguish of the divided mind, and had suffered from the tyranny to the imagination. It can hardly be said that he was over-balanced by his imaginative powers: they were all needed for his matchless achievement, and it was by their most potent aid that he won through in the end, to peace and security. But no one can read his plays and not feel the fierce strain that they put upon him. His pictures of the men in whom imagination is predominant—Richard II, Hamlet, Macbeth—are among the most wonderful in his gallery, the most closely studied, and intimately realised. But not even the veil of drama can hide from us the admiration and devotion that he feels for those other men to whom action is easy—Hotspur, the bastard Faulconbridge, or, chief of all, Othello. These are natural lords of human-kind. Shakespeare holds the balance steady: a measure of the subtle speculative power of Hamlet might have saved Othello from being a murderer; it could not have increased Shakespeare love for him."

2. SHAKESPEARE'S PHILOSOPHY.

Shakespeare was, above all, a poet, and not a philosopher. He did not have any morality to preach, nor did he use his plays as a vehicle of his views on life. Hazlitt referring to this quality of Shakespeare's works writes: "Shakespeare was in one sense the least moral of all writers; for morality (commonly so called) is made up of antipathies; and his talent consisted in sympathy with human nature in all its shapes, degrees, depressions and elevation." Raleigh referring to the same point remarks: "Shakespeare baffled all imitators by his speed and inexhaustible variety. His early comedies might perhaps be brought within the compass of a formula, though the volatile essence which is their soul would escape in the process. His historical plays observe no certain laws, either of history or of drama. The attempt to find a theoretic basis for the great tragedies has never been attended with the smallest success. Man is greater than the mode of his thought which is called philosophy, as a whole is greater than a part; and the Shakespearean drama is an instrument of expression incomparably fuller and richer than the tongs and bones of moralists and metaphysicians."

In fact, Shakespeare had no trust in philosophy to grapple

with the problems of life. In this connection Raleigh has remarked: "When Shakespeare grappled with the ultimate problems of life he had the help of no talisman or magic script. Doctrine, theory, metaphysics, morals,—how should these help a man at the last encounter? Men forge themselves these weapons, and glory in them, only to find them an encumbrance at the hour of need. Shakespeare's many allusions to philosophy and reason show how little he trusted them. It is the foolish Master Slender and the satirical Benedick who profess that their love is governed by reason.

The will of man is by his reason sway'd,

says Lysander, in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, even while he is the helpless plaything of the fairies. Where pain and sorrow come, reason is powerless, good counsel turns to passion, and philosophy is put to shame:

I pray thee, peace! I will be flesh and blood;
For there was never yet Philosopher
That could endure the tooth-ache patiently.
However they have writ the style of Gods,
And made a push at chance and sufferance.

"It is, therefore, vain to seek in the plays for a philosophy or doctrine which may be extracted and set out in brief. Shakespeare's philosophy was the philosophy of the shepherd Corin: he knew that the more one sickens, the worse at ease he is, that the property of rain is to wet, and of the fire to burn. King Lear, when he came by the same knowledge, saw through the flatteries and deceits on which he had fed.—'They told me I was everything; 'tis a lie, I am not ague-proof.' All doctrines and theories concerning the place of man in the universe, and the origin of evil, are a poor and a partial business compared with that dazzling vision of the pitiful estate of humanity which is revealed by tragedy."

Referring to this quality of Shakespeare's works, Drinkwater has remarked: "Tennyson, although he was vitally interested in life, and honest enough in his acceptance of the processes of life so far as he could interpert them, had also certain abstract moral points of view which he was apt to impose upon those processes in course of creation....It is one of the chief glories of Shakespeare's art that it is intensely concerned with life, with its moral consequences, but hardly at all concerned with moral points of view that are not directly the consequence of life as it grows at the poet's bidding. That is why we feel that Shakespeare loved Macbeth, whose moral conduct he must

have condemned, no less than Rosalind, whose conduct he has certainly sanctioned."

Distinguishing between poetry and philosophy, and ranking Shakespeare as the supreme poet and not a philosopher at all, Drinkwater has observed: "Philosophy, says the dictionary, is 'the science of being as being: the knowledge of the causes and laws of all phenomena.' I take this to mean that philosophy is concerned with the deduction of abstract principles from particular instances.....I know at least what philosophy primarily proposes to do, and I know that it is not what poetry primarily proposes to do. Since the mind of man is not a machine but a flexible organism, every mind will, I suppose, be a bit of everything, and the philosopher and the poet will each stray, by accident or design, and now and again into the other's territory. But in the main the distinction is clear.

"The purpose of poetry is to see as intensely as possible those particular instances from which philosophy formulates its principles, and to give them the most striking form which it can devise. It is concerned not so much with the causes and laws of all phenomena as with the phenomena themselves. It is the poet's faith that to see a thing vividly is to understand it—that in the image of the thing itself are revealed the causes and laws that govern its nature. The representation of the thing seen is the function of his art, and an infinitely complicated business it is. So complicated that it is a common device of the poet to represent the thing seen by placing some other thing before us.

"I am aware that poetry constantly appears to be going beyond, or wide of, this commission. It speculates, it dogmatises, it aspires, it complaints. Nevertheless, the governing condition of its being, to which it always has to return in submission is this perception and representation of phenomena; not it need hardly be added, only material phenomena, since falling in love, for example, may be the thing perceived and represented.

"The measure of a poet's mind then is not its aptness for philosophic abstractions, but its capacity for receiving vivid impressions of a great variety of phenomena, impressions upon which his art will work in the creation of his poetry. In this capacity Shakespeare's mind was probably the most richly endowed that the world has known......

"With speculative thought Shakespeare's mind was not

greatly concerned. His views on social, theological, political, scientific and such themes are mostly those current in his time, and if he takes a side it is not commonly that of a minority. He was even ready to accept popular superstitions and, whether he believed in them or not, to make use of them in his plays. It may amuse us to decide on the evidence of *Coriolanus* that Shakespeare hated mobs, but this kind of thing is but matter for a May morning. The only object on which Shakespeare steadily explores, or rather demonstrates, the profounder issues of philosophy is that of tragic retribution. The expiation of offence in disaster is a theme that he treats consistently with intellectual passion. It is, I think, the only one of which this can be said. He constantly introduces into his plays passages of shrewd and moving worldly wisdom memorably expressed, but these are no more than marginal notes to philosophy. His world is one of consummately realised images, and richer in the ranging of phenomena than any that we know. Shakespeare enters no claim to be reckoned among the philosophers, but a philosopher with nothing but Shakespeare's plays to work upon might construct a system that would discredit his mystery."

A number of critics have examined the plays of Shakespeare with a view to finding out his views on various aspects of life. They cannot be grouped together under a system of philosophy which may be called 'Shakespearean philosophy.' They are just his observations on various problems expressed in the course of his writing the plays. As there is a lot of controversy about them, we will mention only those which are generally accepted by critics of repute.

In the first place, Shakespeare believes in an overruling Destiny. In this connection Minto writes in his book, *Characteristics of English Poets*: "The poet recognises an overruling Destiny above all tumult. It is not a cold remote power of marble majesty; it is represented (Sonnet 115) as being in intimate connection with human affairs:

> Reckoning Times, whose million'd accidents
> Creep in 'twixt vows and change decrees of kings,
> Than sacred beauty, blunt the sharp'st intents,
> Divert strong minds to the course of altering things.

"Nothing is more remarkable in Shakespeare's plays, and nothing contributes more to the influence of chance, of undesigned accidents. The most tragic events turn on the most

trifling circumstances. The fate of Richard II is traced to a momentary impulse. When Bolingbroke and Mowbray are mounted for the encounter, and waiting for the signal to charge, the king on a sudden thought throws down his warder, stops the fight, and sends the combatants into exile. This impulse cost him kingdom and life. (2 *Henry IV*)

> O when the king did throw his warder down,
> His own life hung upon the staff he threw.

Poor Desdemona's fate hangs on the accidental dropping of a handkerchief. The unhappy deaths of Romeo asd Juliet are the result of the miscarriage of a letter. 'The most noble blood of all this world' might not have been spilt untimely had Caesar not postponed reading the schedule of Artemidorus. Wolsey fell from the full meredian of his glory through a single slight inadvertence: one fatal slip which not all his deep sagacity could redeem. But the predominance of chance over human designs is most powerfully brought out in the tragedy of Hamlet whose fate turns on accident after accident........In the second Scene of the last Act, Hamlet tells Horatio how accidentally and how rashly the discovered the treachery of Rosencrantz and Guildenstern. He lay sleepless in his cabin, when an impulse took him to rise and rob them of treir pocket—

> Sir, in my heart there was a kind of fighting,
> That would not let me sleep ; methought I lay
> Worse than the mutinies in the biboes. Rashly,
> And praised be rashness for it, let us know,
> **Our indiscretion sometimes serves us well**
> **When our deep plots do pall** ; and that should teach us
> There's a divinity that shape our ends,
> Rough-hew them how we will.

That is Shakespeare's poetical religion: a power variously denominated Destiny, Fate, Chance, Providence—supreme over mortal affairs. The varied energies of the world, which no man has ever embodied with such force and subtlety of conception and expression, are governed and shut in by the great sublimities of time and space. Read his sonnets and mark how frequently his meditations fall into this vein—

> When I consider everything that grows
> Holds in perfection but a little moment,
> That this huge stage presenteth, nought but shows
> Whereon the stars in secret influence comment.

It is the stars that guide our moving, that govern our conditions. But nothing can preserve us against 'confounding age's cruel knife'—

Like as the waves make toward the pebbled shore,
So do our minutes hasten to our end.

Sometimes his spirit revolts against the tyranny of Time and Fate. He imparts fresh vigour to the commonplace boast that the record of love shall outlive ruin and decay. At other moments, the relentless march of time is evidently disquieting to him, and he seems ready to cry with his own Henry IV :

O God that one might read the Book of Fate
And see the revolution of the times
Make mountains level, and **the continent.**
Weary of solid firmness, melt itself.
Into the sea and, other times, to see
The beachy girdle of the ocean
Too wide for Neptune's hips ; **how chances mock,**
And changes fill the cup of alteration.
With divers liquors ! Oh, if this were seen
The happiest youth, viewing his progress through,
What perils past, what crosses to ensue,
Would shut the book, and sit him down and die."

Regarding Shakespeare's personal religion. Bradley observes in his lecture on 'Shakespeare the man' In his *Oxford Lecture on Poetry :* "Shakespeare", I imagine, was not, in the sense assigned to the word, a religious man. Nor was it natural to him to regard good and evil, better and worse, from a theological point of view. But this appears certain he had a lively and serious sense of 'conscience', of the pain of self-reproach and self-condemnation, and of the torment to which this pain might rise. He was not in the least disposed to regard conscience as somehow illusory or a human invention, but on the contrary thought of it as connected with the power that rules the world and is not escapable by man. He realised very fully and felt very keenly, after his youth was past and at certain times of stress, the sufferings and wrongs of men, the strength of evil, the hideousness of certain forms of it, and its apparent incurability in certain cases. And he must sometimes have felt this as a terrible problem. But, however he may have been tempted, and may have yielded, to exasperation and even despair, he never doubted that it is best to be good; felt more and more that one must be patient and must forgive; and probably maintained unbroken a conviction, practical if not formulated, that to be good is to be at peace with that unescapable power. But it is unlikely that he attempted to theorise further on the nature of the power. All was for him, in the end, mystery; and, while we have no reason whatever to attribute

to him a belief in the ghosts and oracles he used in his dramas, he not not inclination to play the spy of God or to limit his power by our notions of it. That he had dreams and ponderings about the mystery such as he never put into the mouths of actors I do not doubt; but I imagine they were no more than dreams and ponderings and movings about the worlds unrealised.

"Whether to this 'religion' he joined a more or less conventional acceptance of some or all the usual Christian ideas, it is impossible to tell. There is no great improbability to me in the idea that he did not, but it is more probable to me that he did.—that, in fact, though he was never so tormented as Hamlet, his position in this matter was, at least in middle life (and he never reached old age), much like Hamlet's. If this were so it might naturally happen that, as he grew older and wearied of labour, and perhaps of the tumult of pleasure and thought and pain, his more personal religion, the natural piety which seems to gain in weight and serenity in the latest plays, came to be more closely joined with Christian ideas. But I can find no clear indications that this did happen; and though some have believed that they discovered these ideas displayed in full, though not explicitly in *The Tempest*, I am not able to hear there more than the stream of Shakespeare's own religion 'moving with the fullest volume and making its deepest and most harmonious music'."

Regarding Shakespeare's political beliefs, Bradley writes: "Shakespeare, as we might expect, shows no sign of believing in what is sometimes called a political 'principle'. The main ideas which, consciously or unconsciously, seem to govern or emerge from this presentation of state of affairs, might perhaps be put thus. National welfare is the end of politics, and the criterion by which political actions are to be judged. It implies of necessity 'degree'; that is, difference of position and function in the members of the body politic. And the first requisites of national welfare are the observance of this degree, and the concordant performance of these functions in the general interest. But there appear to be no further absolute principles than these: beyond them all is relative to the particular case and its particular conditions. We find no hint, for example, in *Julius Caesar*, that Shakespeare regarded a monarchical form of government as intrinsically better than a republican, or *vice versa*; no trace in *Richard II*, that the author shares the king's belief in his inviolable right, or regards Bolingbroke's usurpation as justifiable. We perceive again, pretty clearly in several plays

a dislike and contempt of demagogues, and an opinion that mobs are foolish, fickle, and ungrateful. But these are sentiments which the most determined of believers in democracy, if he has sense, may share; and if he thinks that the attitude of aristocrats like Volumnia and Coriolanus is inhuman and inexcusable as that of the mob, and that a mob is as easily led right as wrong and has plenty of good nature in it, he has abundant ground for holding that Shakespeare thought so too. That Shakespeare greatly liked and admired the typical qualities of the best kind of aristocrat seems highly probable; but then this taste has always been compatible with a great variety of political opinions. It is interesting, but useless to wonder what his own opinions would have been at various periods of English history: perhaps the only thing we can be pretty sure of in regard to them is that they would never have been extreme, and that he would never have supposed his opponents to be entirely wrong."

3. SHAKESPEARE, THE POET.

Shakespeare is not only the greatest dramatist of England, but also her supreme poet. In fact he started his literary career as a poet and when he was engaged in the writing of his play he did not abandon poetry, but brought about a fine combination of drama and poetry. Raleigh rightly points out that "it is safe to assert that Shakespeare was a poet before he was a dramatist." Dover Wilson considers Shakespeare as the ideal poet and believes that the following definition of the poet given by Wordsworth most aptly applies to Shakespeare:

> "He is a man speaking to men ; a man, it is true, endued with more lively sensibility, more enthusiasm and tenderness, who has a greater knowledge of human nature, and a more comprehensive soul, than are supposed to be common among mankind ; a man pleased with his own passions and volitions, and who rejoices more than other men, in the spirit of life that is in him ; delighting to contemplate similar volitions and passions as manifested in the goings on of the universe, and habitually impelled to create them where he does not find them."

Drinkwater holds the same opinion and has observed in his fine monograph on Shakespeare: "Everybody knows that Shakespeare is the greatest English poet. Most people could not say very clearly how they knew it, but they could with little difficulty of reference advance the opinion of every critic of importance since his time. Jonson and Milton and Dryden through Keats and Wordsworth and Arnold down to Robert

Bridges and Lascelles Abercrombie in support of their faith. We may take it, in this case, that everybody is right. And yet it is necessary in every new consideration of Shakespeare to lay stress again on the fact that he was a poet. Quite recently someone has been seriously advocating that his language should be modernised so that it may be readily intelligible to a new age. This is silly, but it is significant. For this cardinal point has to be realised about Shakespeare before we can approach the truth about him. His essential greatness lies not in his plots or his humanity or his sense of character, but in his poetry. Without this, the rest amount to nothing beyond the reach of other men; with it they become his and his alone:

"Let us consider one of the simplest passage of poetry in the plays. Brutus's:

> O, that a man might know
> The end of this day's business ere it come,
> But it sufficeth that the day will end,
> And then the end is known.

It might be said that this roughly means, 'I wish we knew what is going to happen; but it doesn't matter, we shall soon.' But the whole point is that it doesn't roughly mean that at all. It doesn't even mean anything remotely resembling that. It means something quite different, and what it means can be expressed only in one way:

> O, that a man might know
> The end of this day's business ere it come,
> But is sufficeth that the day will end,
> And then the end is known.

This is not that other meaning plus the adornment of great poetry, it is that other meaning transmuted by great poetry into something of a new kind. It is not the quality but the essential nature that has been changed. Indeed, it should not even be put like that. Shakespeare's lines are not a transmutation by great poetry of that other meaning, they are the expression of a different meaning conceived in terms of great poetry from the first.

"This consideration has to be applied to the fabric of the plays as a whole. The expression throughout, with negligible intervals, is that of great poetry, usually in verse but sometimes in prose. Again, it is not a case of simple tales adorned by great poetry. That is why any attempt to give a summary of the plays in other terms inevitably fails. You may discuss philosophy or technical questions raised by *Macbeth*, but you

cannot say what *Macbeth* means nor what the story is except by repeating the play from the first word to the last. Moreover, the poetry of *Macbeth* is not only great poetry, it is great dramatic poetry. This does not mean that it is great poetry being used for the purposes of drama but that it is great poetry which is drama. The tremendous moments in Shakespeare are not moments of sudden surprise in action, of unexpected discovery of character, of philosophic revelation, but of dramatic poetry. 'Soft you, a word or two.' 'To-morrow and to-morrow and to-morrow,' 'Our revels now are ended,' 'O that a man might know,' 'I know when one is dead and when one lives.' 'The rest is silence,' 'I am dying, Egypt dying,' 'Thou art not conquered,' 'He's in Arthur's bosom,' 'This day is called the feast of Crispian,' 'What must the king do now?' 'I fluttered your Volscians in Corioli,' 'Ripeness is all,'—these things are not drama fortunate in the choice of perfect words, words moving in that utmost fulness of cadence, evocation, imagery, suggestion, when they become great poetry, kindled into great poetry."

Shakespeare was the greatest English poet, and the greatest dramatic poet. In fact his real greatness lies in the final alliance that he brought about of poetry and drama. In this connection, Drinkwater writes: "It was in his command of poetry as drama that Shakespeare's originality lay. Here he went beyond anything achieved before or since, and it is the sign of supremacy. There is little that can be said about it. The magic cannot be explained, nor the significance paraphrased. But once we see it for what it is, and acknowledge its authority, our minds are free from discussion of other and smaller aspects of Shakespeare's art. The fables of his plays were mostly not of his own invention, and his thought, though often profound, was also often taken ready-made from his age. Fable and thought alike were used by the dramatic poet, wrought into the texture of his poetry, and it made no odds to him whether they were original or borrowed. Once they had been reconceived in his creative moods, he no longer had to fear these inquisitions."

Referring to this fine alliance of poetry and drama, Raleigh has observed: "The day for discussing the notorious unities in connection with Shakespeare's drama, is long past. Romantic poetry created its own drama and acknowledges no unity save that which is equally binding on a poem or a prose story—the unity of impression. Nowhere is the magic of

Shakespeare's art greater than here. He reduces a wild diversity of means to a single purpose; and submits the wealth of his imagination and knowledge to be judged by this one test. His landscape, his moonlight and sunlight and darkness, his barren heaths and verdurous parks, are all agents in the service of dramatic poetry. 'It is almost morning,' says Portia, at the close of *The Merchant of Venice*,—and the words have an indescribable human value. When Claudio, in *Much Ado*, has paid his last tribute to the empty tomb of Hero, and all things are arranged for the final restoration of happiness, Don Pedro speaks:

> Good morrow, masters ; put your torches out.
> The wolves have prey's, and look, the gentle day,
> Before the wheels of Phoebus, round about
> Dapples the drowsy East with spots of grey.

But the best instance of the alliance of poetry with the drama is to be found in *As You Like It*. The scene is laid, for the most part, in the forest of Arden. A minute examination of the play has given a curious result. No single bird, or insect, or flower, is mentioned by name. The words 'flower', 'leaf' do not occur. The trees of the forest are the oak, the hawthorn, the palm-tree, and the olive. For the animals, there are the deer, one lioness, and one green and gilded snake. The season is not easy to determine; perhaps it is summer; we hear only of the biting cold and the wintry wind. 'But these are all lies,' as Rosalind would say, and the dramatic truth has been expressed by those critics who speak of 'the leafy solitudes sweet with the song of the birds'. It is nothing to the outlaws that their forest is poorly furnished with stage-proprieties; they fleet the time carelessly in a paradise of gaiety and indolence, and there is summer in their hearts. So Shakespeare attains his end without the bathos of an allusion to the soft green grass, which must needs have been represented by the boards of the theatre. The critical actuaries are baffled, and find nothing in this play to assess; Shakespeare's dramatic estate cannot be brought under the hammer, for it is rich in nothing but poetry."

Regarding the development of Shakespeare's style as a poet, George Rylands writes in the book, *A Companion to Shakespeare*: "In a general survey of Shakespeare's style we might say that he passed through three stages. In the first he is primarily a poet and an Elizabethen poet at that, indebted to Spenser, Marlowe and Lyly. To this period belong the

poems, almost all the sonnets, and three very successful plays, a comedy, a history and a tragedy, all of which are as much poems as they are plays. He then undergoes a transitional phase, the second phase common to most great writers, where he learns to select, to restrain, to omit; in a word, the art to blot. He largely abandons verse in favour of prose, for some of his characters demand the new medium, and Marlow's mighty line proved facile in imitation. The style of the verse, where we have it, is not far removed from that of prose; in the trial scene of *The Merchant of Venice*, for example, natural fluent as Heywood, 'well-languaged' as that of Daniel, in conformity with the Wordsworthian ideal. In *Julius Caesar* there is more volume, more emphasis, more organic strength. But it is Roman simplicity. And then a change! In the tragic period Shakespeare is most himself in metre and in diction, but we might still call him a Jacobian although not an Elizabethan poet; his style has affinities with that of Webster and even Sir Thomas Browne. Remarkable in this period are his experiments in vocabulary and his peculiar use of metaphor, his combinations of concrete and abstract, of sensual and intellectual, which link him with that great rebel against Elizabethanism, John Donne. And here the metaphors and imagery are subservient to the main design, now to the atmosphere of the whole and now to the characterisation. Finally in the romances or tragi-comedies we detect signs of a reaction to Elizabethanism; a reassertion of the imagery and mythological allusions of Spenser, Marlowe and Lyly. But in *Antony and Cleopatra*, *Cymbaline* and *The Winter's Tale* Shakespeare seems to gather in all the harvest of his poetic and dramatic experience, to hark back and to adventure farther. He has mastered style, but style has become an exacting and imperious mistress. Yet in *The Tempest* she ceases for a moment to be so whimsical provocative and outrageous. We have the colloquial simplicity of

> They'll take suggestion as a cat laps milk,

or the direct expression of character or situation in

> You taught me language ; and my profit in't
> Is, I know how to curse,
> I am your wife if you will marry me.
> If not, I'll die your maid ; to be your fellow
> You may deny me but I'll be your servant
> Whether you will or no.

Yet even in *The Tempest* there are such idiomatic things as

> The fringed curtains of thine eye advance,

or earthly and abhorred commands,' 'pointed and twilled brims' and 'dark backward abysm of time', which may be compared with 'the Areopagy and dark tribunal of our hearts' in Sir Thomas Browne, Prospero's great speech 'Ye elves of hill...' look back in tone and *tempo* to Titania's 'These are the forgeries of jealousies......".

In general Shakespeare's poetic style is characterised by ease and fluency. His friends and editors, Heminge and Coundell say about him. "His mind and hand went together, and what he thought, he uttered with that easiness, that we have scarce received from him a blot in his papers." Ben Jonson says about him, "He had an excellent phantasy, brave notions and gentle expression; wherein he flowed with that facility, that sometimes it was necessary he should be stopped." In this connection Raleigh remarks: "No one who has ever been caught in the torrent of Shakespeare's ideas and metaphors could mistake him for a slow, painful, and laborious writer. The frank geniality of the man and the excitable fervour of the talker are matched by the unchecked exuberance of the poet. He does not waylay his meaning, and capture it at a blow, but hunts it with a full cry of hounds, attended by a gay and motley company. His mind is rich in ornaments, images and after-thoughts. His style is full of incidents and surprises, when he makes an end he has commonly told you far more than he set out to tell you. In his later plays he is more condensed, not by the chastening of his method, but by the crowded enrichment of his matter. Always the method is the same; the phrase or sentence that does not quite do his business is retained in his service, and another is added to compete with it and overtake it; wave follows wave and breaks short of the goal, until, at the ninth time of asking, the master-wave gathers the others into itself, and surrounds you and lifts you. When he becomes severe and bare, as he commonly does at the top of his tragic passion, it is not by the excision of superfluities, but by the very intensity of the situation, which catches his eloquent fancy by the throat, and compels him to put his meaning into a few broken words. Let but the grip of facts be relaxed for a moment, his discursive imagination rouses itself again, and the full current of speech is resumed. In this way Shakespeare often gives a double expressiveness to a tragic crises, and alternates dramatic silence with poetic eloquence. The high-strung whispered conversation of Macbeth with his wife, carried on in monosyllables of question and reply, is followed at once by his great imaginative outbursts on the

murder of innocent sleep. The parting of Troilus and Cressida is first made beautiful by the poetic lament of Troilus:

> We two, that with so many thousand sighs
> Did but each other, must poorly sell overselves
> With the rude brevity and discharge of one.
> Injurious Time now with a robber's haste
> Crams his rich thievery up, he knows not how :
> As many farewells as be stars in heaven,
> With distinct breath and consign'd kisses to them.
> He fumbles up into with a single famish'd kiss,
> Distasting with the salt of broken tears.

Then crude fact has its turn, and the voice of Aeneas is heard calling—

> My Lord, is the Lady ready ?

It would be difficult to name any moving situation in Shakespeare where he does not find or make an opportunity to give a loose to his pen and to pour out some scantling at least of the riotous wealth of his imagination. His case is so great, that his wildest conceits hardly seem far-fetched. They throng about him like poor suitors proffering their services, and the magnificence of his generosity finds them work to do."

Another important characteristic of Shakespeare's poetic style is its energy and swiftness. Explaining this Minto has observed in his book, *Characteristics of English Poets*: "The most general reader is impressed by the width of Shakespeare's range through varied effects of strength, pathos and humour: and minute methodical reading brings an increase of admiration. It must not, however, be supposed that Shakespeare's poetry embraces all the qualities to be found in all other poets—that every effect producible by poetry on the human spirit finds it a most conspicuous exemplification in his plays. He fills us with wonder, with submissive awe, with heroic energy and sadness; no mortal man has struck so many different notes; yet with all his marvellous versatility, he had his own individual touch, and he left an inexhaustible variety of notes to be sounded. Shakespeare was a man of wonderful range; but his plays are not a measure of the effects that lies within the compass of poetic language.

"The might that Shakespeare excels in expressing is not the might of slow and regular agencies, but the might of swift and confounding agencies. His power is figured in the boast of Prospero—

To the dread rattling thunder
Have I given fire, and rifted Jove's stout oak
With his own bolt.

The awful energies that he sets in motion move with lightning swiftness and overpowering suddenness: the sublime influence does not soar and sail above us; it comes about our senses, flashing and cracking, dazzling and confounding like Jove's own bolt. His words pass over us like the burst and ear-deafening voice of the oracle over Cleomenes, surprising the hearer into nothingness; or flame before our amazed eyes like the sight out-running activity of Ariel on board the king's ship in the tempest. Milton's sublimity has not the same life, the same magic energy; it is statelier and less intimate: the effect is not so sudden and overwhelming. There is an excitement akin to madness in the swiftly concentrated energy of some of Shakespearean occasional bursts. Lear's curses are quivering with compressed force—

All the stored vengeance of heaven fall
On her ungrateful top! Strike her young bones,
Ye talking airs, with lameness!

And again—

Now all the plagues that in the pendulous air
Hang fated o'er men's faults light on thy daughters!

There is a similar half-maddening excitement compressed, as it were, with strong hand, but trembling on the verge of frantic explosion, the Lucrece's invocation of Night—

O comfort killing Night, image of hell!
Dim register and notary of shame!
Black stage for tragedies and murders fell!
Vast sin-concealing chaos! nurse of defame!
Blind muffled bawd! dark barbour for defame!
Grim cave of death! whispering conspirator
With close-tongued treason and the ravisher.

Claudio's anticipation of the horrors of death (*Measure for Measure*, iii; 1, 118), Lady Macbeth's invocation (i, 5, 40), Calphurnia's description of the portents (*Julius Caesar*, ii, 2, 13). Othello's imprecations on himself (v, 277), are pregnant with a similar energy. Such passages are few and far between, as in a volcanic country you find many grandeurs with supreme accumulations here and there. In Macbeth's dark hints to his wife about to plot to murder Banquo, the sublime passion is calmer and less thrilling, but there is a lurking devil of swift excitability even in that lofty passage—

Macb. There's comfort yet; they are assailable:
Then be thou jocund; ere the bat hath flown
His cloister'd flight, ere to black Hecat's summons
The shard-borne beetle with his drowsy hums
Hath rung night's yawning peal, there shall be done?
A deed of dreadful note.

Lady Macb. What's to be done?

Macb. Be innocent of the knowledge, dearest chunk,
Till thou applaud the need. Come, sealing night,
Scarf up the tender eye of pitiful day;
And with thy bloody and invisible hand
Cancel and tear to pieces that great bond
Which keeps me pale! Light thickens, and the crow
Makes wing to the rooky wood:
Good things of day begin to drop and drowse;
While night's agents to their prey's do rouse.

I am not aware that any passage can be quoted from Shakespeare with the composed stately, sustained grandeur of Milton's description of Satan: Shakespeare's sublime agencies do not move with the same massive dignity—they are instinct with quick life and motion, and their change of attitude is like lightning. The planetary Miltonic grandeur was not, indeed, suited to his purposes as a dramatist. A Satan of Miltonic dignity put upon the stage must have appeared more or less of a bombast Tamburlaine. Caesar 'the foremost man of all this world,' who, as Cassius mockingly said, 'bestrode the narrow world like a Colossus,' and who, as he said himself, was 'constant as the northern star,' is Shakespeare's nearest approach to Miltonic grandeur of conception; but the grandeur is not sustained as in Milton, it is made up by momentary glances of the poet's swift-ranging imagination. Othello is grand with a volcanic grandeur, he is easily moved, he blazes out suddenly with such commands as—

Hold, for your lives!

. . . .

He that stirs next to carve for his own rage
Holds his soul light; he dies upon his motion.

Henry V was a favourite with the poet, and the prologue to the play where he appears, after shaking off the base contagious clouds that smothered up his beauty from the world, is conceived in a spirit of swelling sublimity; but mark the nature and attitude of the powers held in reserve by the mighty monarch—

O for a Muse of fire, that would ascend
The brightest heaven of invention!

A kingdom for a stage, princes to act
And monarchs to behold the swelling scene!
Then should the warlike Harry, like himself
Assume the port of Mars: and at his heels
Lash'd in like hounds, should famine, sword, and fire
Crouch for employment.

In accordance with this characteristic, Shakespeare's descriptions of storms and tempests or the dread witching hour with devilry in the mysterious background; of hurly-burly, riot, and confusion, or vague impending terrors; of hell let loose or hell pent up and stealthily preparing to spring out,—are far and away incomparable. Description is more in the way of the epic poet than of the dramatist; but the dramatist also, even in the modern drama, often has occasion to describe what his personages saw before they made their appearance on the stage. Shakespeare loses no opportunity for description. Sometimes, as in the beginning of the Second Act of *Othello*, he makes personages on the stage describe with vivid effect what they see taking place behind the scenes—the struggle of vessel after vessel on a fiercely tempestuous sea.

"Storms in the social world, 'the grappling vigour and rough frown of war,' were the social element in the Elizabethan drama, and Shakespeare entered into them with delighted energy. The various circumstances of war are described in his historical plays with a spirit and vividness that one might expect from a professional man of blood, possessed with the habitual fierceness of M. Taine's typical Elizabethan. His imagination revelled in the scenic glories and horrors of invasion and conflict. The picture of the invading army in *Richard II*, iii 4, 95—

Fightening the pale-faced with war
And ostentations of despised arms—

carries his peculiar thrill in its compressed force: and there is a still more unhinging panic-striking energy in the announcement made to King John (v. 1, 35)—

And wild amazement hurries up and down
The little number of your doubtful friends.

He describes the night-watch before the battle with the dreadful note of preparation (*Henry V* iv, Prologue), and the bloody field after (*Henry V* iv, 1, 74).

"So much for scenic grandeur, which are but accidents in the drama; let us look now at spiritual grandeurs, which are the dramatic pith and essence. One main function of the

drama is to conceive and express the storms of the individual heart under all the variety of passions that stir it to the depths—love, jealousy despair, revenge, ambition. These storms may arise under endless variety of conditions, and we require of the dramatist not only adequate energy of expression but a certain truth to nature in the origin and fluctuation of passion: the passion must neither arise nor change without just motive. As the passion transcends nature, so may—indeed, so must—the motive: but the relation between the two must not the outrage nature. In this correspondence between the motive and the passion consists dramatic truth: dramatic subtlety is shown chiefly in the fluctuations of passions. It is Shakespeare's supreme pre-eminence to combine this truth and subtlety with incomparable energy of expression.

"Many people believe that there is hardly a situation in life that cannot be paralleled from Shakespeare; and curiously enough, this contrast between physical and spiritual commotions is definitely expressed by one of his dramatic creatures, and the spiritual declared to be the more impressive. In *King John* (v. 2, 40), Lewis replies as follows to Salisbury's agitation and conflict of spirit of following the banners of his country's invader:—

> A noble temper dost thou show in this ;
> And great affections, wrestling in thy bosom,
> Doth make an earthquake of nobility.
>
> . . . .
>
> My heart hath melted at a lady's tears,
> Being an ordinary inundation ;
> But this effusion of such manly drops,
> This shower, blown up by the tempest of the soul,
> Startles mine eyes, and makes me more amazed
> Than had I seen the vaulty top of heaven
> Figures quite o'er with burning meteors.

Bacon wondered why a woman's eye should be so gazed at when the beauties of the heaven were so little regarded. That wonder spoke the philosopher no less unmistakably than the above passage speaks the dramatist. Human passion affected him more than the grandest phenomena of inanimate nature.

"No poet has approached Shakespeare in imagining and expressing the tempest raised in the soul by supernatural apparitions. This is another aspect of his power over the expression of wild, swift-thrilling excitement. Macbeth's agitation after his first interview with the witches, his quivering horror

and hoarse cries before the ghost of Banquo, the suppressed delirium of Hamlet's first address to the ghost of his father, exhibit the poet's power in its maturity, when art moves with the freedom of instinct and imagination and expression go together with hand loosely in hand.

"The fierce passion of the fight, the fiery exhortations of excited leaders, ferocious teeth-grinding challenge and indignant defiance, infuriated pursuit and savage standing at bay, are prominent in several of Shakespeare's plays.... Warlike fury becomes most impressive and demands the utmost strain of imagination to give it deep and full body, when it rises out of the decay of hope, when the soldier's arm is its refuge against the falling of friends and the thickening troops of enemies. It is when the warrior is baited like Macbeth, or hunted like Richard, or caught in the toils like Antony, that the war passion concentrates for a burst of supreme energy, quickening the most peaceful pulses and thrilling the least combustible nerves with sympathetic fire. With Macbeth the supreme moment comes when the promise is explained away that had before steeled him with a trust invulnerable destiny. For a moment the stripping off of that supernatural protection cows his better part of man, but it is only a momentary crouch: there is a depth beneath undrawn: and what condensed firmness and ferocity there is in his bearing when he towers and fronts Macduff with his last defiance—

I will not yield,
To kiss the ground before Young Malcom's feet,
And to be baited with the rebel's curse,
Though Birman wood be come to Dunsinane,
And though opposed, bring of no woman born,
Yet I will try the last. Before my body
I throw my warlike shield.

"In the 'old ruffian,' the magnanimous 'sworder,' Antony, when hemmed in like a lion by overpowering numbers, the spirit mounts above the dark fierceness of despair. He goes to battle with savage laughter: his blood-thirsty ferocity is strangely tempered with sweetness, if not with light. Bewitched by his passion for Cleopatra, he has let slip opportunity after opportunity till the final struggle can be delayed no longer he rouses himself perforce and puts forth his strength to show the world that—

'Tis better playing with a lion's whelp,
Than with an old one dying.

His talk with Cleopatra at the banquet on the evening before his last effort, is a fine illustration of Shakespeare's hold and sure treatment of the stormiest passions. The dramatist takes on the situation as it were instinctively: the words seem to come by spontaneous impulse. Antony's last 'gaudy night' is no carousal to drown care: no effort to forget the coming morrow. War is not excluded from the banquet: on the contrary, he is the guest of the evening, he sits on Antony's right while Love is on the left.

"Akin to material rage is fiery invective, the warfare of the tongue, the last resort of women and misanthropes, of oppressed Margarets and soured Timons.... The surest evidence that a dramatist has taken hold of the complete body of a strong passion is seen in his representation of its transfiguring power. The power of strong feeling to transfigure and distort, to make foul things seem fair to the impassioned vision and fair things foul, is a very familiar fact, understood to a certain depth by the most ordinary novelist. Almost anybody could have conceived the perversion of the brave o'erhanging firmament by the force of melancholy into a foul and pestilent congregation of vapours. But there are much more startling and sweeping transfigurations wrought by the fire of passion among Shakespeare's characters. One of the most striking is the revelation of his mother's guilt by Hamlet in the closet scene (*Hamlet*, iii, 4, 40). In the frenzy of his moral indignation, all nature seems to join with the avenger in flaming horror and hideous disgust at the monstrosity of the crime:

Heaven's face doth glow;
Yes, this solidity and compound mass,
With trustful visage as against the doom
Is thought, sick at the act.

"But if Shakespeare is supreme in angry invective, he is equally supreme in the expression of the impassioned transport of love. Juliet may for a moment be angry with Romeo for the death of her kinsman Tybalt, but her whole soul is up in arms when she hears the words, 'Shame come to Romeo'.—

Blistered be thy tongue
For such a wish! He was not born to shame;
Upon his brow shame is ashamed to sit;
For 'its a throne where honour may be crowned
Sole monarch of the universal earth!

There is a fine contrast throughout between the two pairs of lovers, Romeo and Juliet and Antony and Cleopatra. Juliet's

fiery, brevity and flashing sublime splendour is no less in keeping with her virgin youth, than is the magnificent torrent of hyperboles with which the passionate Queen of Egypt defies her paramour characteristic of her meritricious maturity and experience. In vain poor Dolabella makes polite efforts to be heard: there is no resisting the tide of Cleopatra's eloquence—

Cleo. I heard there was an Emperor Antony:
O, such another sleep, that I might see
But such another men!
Dol. If it might please ye—
Cleo. His face was as the heavens and therein stuck
A sun and moon, which kept their course and lighted
The little O, the earth.
Dol. Most sovereign creature—
Cleo. His legs bestride the ocean; his rear'd arm
Created the words: the voice was propertied,
As all the tuned spheres; and that to friends;
But when he meant to quail and shake the orb,
He was as rattling thunder. For his bounty
There was no winter in't; an autumn 'twas
That grew the more by reaping; his delights
Were dolphin-like; they show'd his back above
The element they lived in: in his livery
Walk'd crowns and crownets; realms and islands were
As plates dropp'd from his pocket.

"And all the lovers' raptures must yield to the world-absorbing passion of Romeo in the sixth Scene of the Second Act, where the violent delights of the lovers are approaching their culmination—

Friar. So smile the heavens upon this holy act,
That after hours with sorrow chide us not.

Rom. Amen, amen! but come what sorrow can,
It cannot countervail the exchange of joy
That one short minute gives me in her sight:
Do thou but close our hands with holy words,
Then love-devouring death do what he dare;
It is enough I may but call her mine.

The dazzling and confounding power of sudden apparition of beauty is described with inspired zeal in the unexpected outburst of the merry lord, Biron (*Love's Labour's Lost*). But Biron's description of the majesty of his mistress is surpassed in idolatrous elevation and enraptured homage by Cassio's welcome to Desdemona (*Othello*, ii, 1, 83).

O, behold,
The riches of the ship is come on shore!

Ye men of Cyprus, let her have your knees.
Hail to thee, lady ! and the grace of heaven,
Before, behind thee, and on every hand,
Enheel the round.

Such a reception is worthy of the lady 'that paragons description, and wild fame'. When, however, the poet has to describe the power of more than mortal charms, he surpasses his wildest tributes to mortal beauty. Oberon's account of the effect of the mermaid's song (*Midsummer Night's Dream*, ii, 1, 48) dwindles all other hyperboles into meanness—

My gentle Puck, come hither. Thou rememberest
Since once I sat promonotory.
And heard a mermaid on a dolphin's back
Uttering such dulcet and harmonious breath,
That the rude sea grew civil at her song,
And certain star shot madly from their spheres
To hear the seamaid's music.

"In all these passages the energy is swift and darting, with here and there a momentary poise or slowing of speed, as it dwells on some revelation of spiritual of scenic grandeur. There is no end to the variety of movement, no bounds to its range: it ascends to the most passionate heaven of love, and enters with equal zeal the gloomiest hell of hatred and desperate fury, of bitter curses and set teeth. But whenever the energy goes, it goes swiftly. It does not wait calmly to gather body and proceed with quietly over-bearing stateliness: when checked, it rages impatiently and pierces irresistibly through all impediments."

Of the two recognised types of poets—the poets of sensation and the poets of thought, or, in other words, the unconscious poets and the deliberate artists, Shakespeare belongs to the former type Examining this issue in detail, Middleton Murray has observed in his book *Shakespeare* ; "What Keats meant by 'sensation' (when he exclaimed, 'O for a life of Sensations rather than Thoughts!') was the spontaneous utterance of the total man through the imagination. Yet this total man was somehow impersonal. As Keats himself said, 'The poetical character.....is not itself......it has no self.' He was speaking of one type of poetical character, the type to which he himself belonged, as distinct from 'the Wordsworthian' or egoistical sublime'. Once Keats has made the distinction, we ratify it by our experience. There is the poetry which includes nearly all poetry, and much of the greatest—in which we are conscious of the poet as making the poetry, and of the poetry itself as some-

thing made; then there is poetry of another kind of which we can only say that we feel that it grew—the poetry which Keats described once for all when he said of it, that 'if Poetry comes not as naturally as the Leaves to a tree, it had better not come at all'. This is what Keat meant by the poetry of 'sensation'; for him it was sensation: the outcome of some mysterious and total surrender of the personal self. It produced Keats' odes and Keats felt that it had produced Shakespeare's poetry; and so far as any total outcast from this heaven may judge of what happens there, Keats was right. He probably had more knowledge of what it felt like to be Shakespeare than any man who has lived.

"This quality in Shakespeare, to which Keats brings us as close as we may ever hope to come, was recognised by Milton. The distinction between the poetry of sensation and the poetry of thought is not merely made by his thinking in the famous sonnet, it is almost caught in a cadence:

> For whilst to th 'shame of slow endeavouring art
> **Thy easy numbers flow**, and that each heart—
> Hath from the leaves of thy unvalu'd book
> Those Delphic lines with deep impression took,
> Then thou our fancy of itself bereaving,
> Doth make us marble with too much conceiving ;
> And so sepulchr'd in such pomp dost lie
> That kings for such a tomb would wish to die.

"Hemings and Condell, the editors of *Shakespeare*, praised him as one 'who as he was a happy imitator of Nature, was a most gentle expresser of it. His mind and hand went together. And what he thought he uttered with that easiness, that we have scarce, received from him a blot in his papers.' No doubt it was exaggerated; but these two men must often have seen Shakespeare in the very act of composition. But Ben Jonson, though he understood a part of Shakespeare could not understand him completely, when he said that the poetry of the Greeks and the Romans in his day, was in comparison with Shakespeare, antiquated and deserted,

> As they were not of Nature's family.
> Yet must I not give Nature all : Thy Art,
> My gentle Shakespeare, must enjoy a part.......

He thought that since Shakespeare was such a great poet, the deliberate art (as Jonson understood it) must have been in him. He thus ascribed to Shakespeare the quality of poetic mind which he himself possessed. Part of him responded quite

selflessly to Shakespeare; part of him insisted on judging Shakespeare by a pattern—the pattern of himself, or the law of deliberate art to which he subscribed.

"It was this conflict in the mind of Jonson regarding Shakespeare's poetic character which was ultimately resolved by Keats who after long pondering over the nature of the poetic character came to the conclusion that a great poet possesses *Negative Capability*, that is, 'when a man is capable of being in uncertainties, mysteries, doubts, without any irritable reaching after fact and reason,' and he discovered that Shakespeare possessed it 'so enormously.' Keats' description of two types of poetic character, and his memorable analysis of the one to which he belonged; the one which has no self, and is 'everything and nothing,' is the best description of Shakes–peare's poetic character that has ever been given. It is the final expression of the paradox that 'Negative Capability' is the quality necessary to supreme imaginative achievement.

"It was on account of this faculty that Shakespeare, as Middleton Murray points out, "remains at the end what he was at the beginning: Nature uttering herself through a human being as completely as we can imagine. We surmise, because we are compelled to surmise it, that there was in him some incomparable faculty for self-submission to experience in all its forms; and we find that those who have discovered in themselves some kindred faculty for self-submission to the work he has left us are those whose names are most certainly imperishable in the long roll of critics."

4. SHAKESPEARE'S VERSIFICATION.

Shakespeare was a past master in versification. Ward referring to this aspect of his book, *A History .of English-Dramatic Literature*, writes: "That the verse of Shakespeare's drama remains as a whole unrivalled, as due to the spontaneous flow of the well of poetry which was in him. We cannot think of him writing his verses, like Jonson in the first instance in prose; for with Shakespeare there can have never been an interval between the conception of it in its appropriate poetic form. This is especially illustrated by the exquisite appropriateness of the lyrics introduced by him into his dramas, which are so true to the tone of a scene or situation; but the same appropriateness is characteristic of his versification as a whole. He cannot be said to have discovered, but he certainly exemplified, with a fulness unequalled if not unapproached, the

pliancy of the chosen metre of the English drama,—the marble flowed under his hands."

Prof. Saintsbury, referring to the qualities of Shakespeare's versification and tracing its development, especially of the blank verse, has observed in *The Cambridge History of English Literature*, Vol. V: "For the earliest period, we have pieces like *Love's Labour Lost* and *The Comedy of Errors* on the one hand, like *Titus Andronicus* on the other. In this last, we see an attempt to play the game of the Marlowe heroic, the unrimed, drumming decasyllabon,' strictly and uncompromisingly. The verses are turned out like bullets, singly from the mould; there is little correspondance (though there is some) to rime, even at the end of scenes and tirades; there is no prose proper. But there is considerable variation of pause; and, though the inflexibility of the line sound is little affected by it, there is a certain running over of sense in which, especially when conjoined with the pause, there is promise for the future.

"The two other plays represent quite a different order of experiment. *Love's Labour's Lost*, specially, is a perfect mixture of metres. There is blank verse, and plenty of it, and sometimes very good, though always inclining to the 'single-mould.' But there is also abundance of rime; plenty of prose; arrangement in stanza especially quatrain; doggerel, sometimes refining itself to tolerably regular anapaests; fourteeners; octosyllables or, rather, the octosyllable shortened catalectically and made trochaic; finally, pure lyric of the most melodious kind. The poet has not made up his mind which is the best instrument and trying all—not, in every case, with a touch, but, in every case, with a touch which brings out the capacities of the instrument itself as it has rarely, if ever, been brought out before.

"In the other early plays, with slight variations in proportion to subject, and with regard to the fact whether they are adaptations or not this process of experiment and, perhaps, half unconscious selection continues. The blank verse steadily improves and, by degrees, shakes off any suggestion of the chain, still more of the tale of bullets, and acquires the astonishing continuity and variety of its best Shakespearean form. Still, it continually relapses into rime—often for long passages, and still often, at the ends or breaks of scenes and at the conclusion of long speeches; sometimes, perhaps, merely to give a cue; sometimes, to emphasise a sentiment or call attention to an incident or an appearance. The very stanza is not relin-

quished; it appears in *Romeo and Juliet*, in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, even in *Merchant of Venice*. The doggerel and the fourteener, except when the latter are used (as they sometimes are) to extend and diversify the blank verse itself, gradually disappear; but the octosyllabic, and more directly lyrical, insets are used freely. The point, however, in that which is, probably, the latest of this batch, and in the whole of the central group of comedies and tragedies, is the final selection of blank verse itself for reliance, and its development. Not only, as has just been noticed, do the deficiencies of the form in its earlier examples—its stiffness, its want of fluency and symphony, the gasps, as it has been put, of a pavior with the lighting and setting down of its hammer—not only do these defects disappear, but the merits and capabilities of the form appear contrariwise in ways for which there is no precedent in prosodic history. The most important of these, of the special dramatic purpose, if also the most obvious, is the easy and unforced breaking up of the lines itself for the purpose of dialogue. But this, of course, had been done with many metres before; even medieval octosyllable writers had had no difficulty with it, though the unsuitableness of rime for dialogue necessarily appeared. But Shakespeare enlarged greatly and bodily on their practice. In all his mature plays—*Hamlet* is a very good example to use for illustration—the decasylabic or five-foot norm is rather a norm than a positive rule. He always, or almost always, makes his lines, whether single, continuous, or broken, referable to this norm. But he will cut them down to shorter, or extend them to greater, length without the least hesitation. Alexandrines are frequent and fourteeners not uncommon, on the one hand; octosyllables and other fractions equally usual. But all adjust themselves to the five-foot scheme; and the pure examples of that scheme preponderate so that there is no danger of its being confused.

Secondly, the lines, by manipulation of pause and of *enjambement* of overunning, are induced to compose a continuous symphonic run—not a series of gasps. In some passages—for instance, the opening lines of *Antony and Cleopatra*—the pause will hardly be found identical in any two of a considerable batch of verse. As to its location, the poet entirely disregards the centripetal rule dear to critics at almost all times. He sometimes disregards it to the extent—horrible to the straiter sect of such critics—of putting a heavy pause at the first or at the ninth syllable. Always, in his middle period, he practises

what he taught to Milton—the secret of the verse period and paragraph—though in drama he has a greater liberty still of beginning this and ending it at any of his varied pause places, without troubling himself whether these places begin and end a line or not. Sometimes, indeed, he seems to prefer that they should not coincide.

"But the third peculiarity which distinguishes the accomplished blank verse of Shakespeare is the most important of all. It is the mastery—on good principles of English prosody from the thirteenth century onwards, but in the teeth of critical dicta in his own day and for centuries to follow—of trisyllable substitution. By dint of this, the cadence of the line is varied, and its capacity is enlarged, in the former case to an almost infinite, in the latter to a very great extent. Once more, the decasyllabic norm is kept, in fact, religiously observed. But the play of the verse, the spring and reach and flexibility of it, are as that of a good fishing-rod to that of a brass curtain-pole. The measure is never really loose—it never in the least approaches doggerel. But it has absolute freedom: no sense that it wishes to convey, and no sound that it wishes to give as accompanied to that sense, meet the slighest check or jar in their expression.

"In the latest division, one of the means of variation which had been used even before Shakespeare, and freely by him earlier, assumes a position of paramount and, perhaps, excessive importance, which it maintains in successors and pupils like Fletcher, and which perhaps, carries with it dangerous possibilities. This is what is sometimes called the feminine, or, in still more dubious phrase, the 'weak' ending; but what may be better, a much more expressively, termed the redundant syllable. That, with careful, and rather sparing use, it adds greatly to the beauty of the measure, there is no doubt at all: the famous Florizel and Perdita scene in *The Winter's Tale* is but one of many instances. But it is so convenient and so easy that it is sure to be abused; and abused it was, not perhaps, by Shakespeare, but certainly by Fletcher. And something worse than mere abuse, destruction of the measure itself, and the substitution of an invertebrate mass of lines that are neither prose nor verse, remained behind.

"But this has nothing to do with Shakespeare, who certainly cannot be held responsible for the mishap of those who would walk in his circle without knowing the secret of his magic. Of that magic his manipulation of all verse that he

tried—sonnet, stanza, couplet, lyric, what not—is perhaps, the capital example, but it reaches its very highest point in regard to blank verse. And, after all, it may be wrong to use the word capital even in regard to this. For he is the *caput* throughout, in conception, and in execution, in character and in story—not an unnatural, full-marvel, but an instance of genius working itself up, on precedent and by experiment, from promise to performance and from the part to the whole."

5. SHAKESPEARE'S WORDS AND IMAGERY.

Shakespeare is remarkable above all other writers for the profusion of his imagery. As one critic said about him, "Every word in him is a picture." This may be an exaggeration, but this is true that there are very few lines without an image. For to Shakespeare anything, whether concrete or abstract, an object or an idea, immediately called up an image. This was a characteristic of the Elizabethan writers, and Shakespeare freely indulged in it.

Referring to the Elizabethans' love of words and imagery and Shakespeare's fondness for this, Minto has observed in his book, *Characteristics of English Poets*: "The art of putting things cleverly and playing upon words was never carried to a greater height than in the age of Elizabeth. The Elizabethans were conscious word-artists—'engineers of phrases,' as Thomas Nash said. 'To see this age!' cries the clown in *Twelfth Night*, 'a sentence is but a cheveril glove to a good wit; how quickly the wrong side may be turned outward'. And this same clown was acting in delicious caricature of the age, when he fastidiously rejected the word 'element'—'who you are and what you would are out of my welkin. I might say "element", but the word is overdone.'

"The delight in similitude went naturally with this extravagant craze for uncommon expression, the fancy was solicited, and when solicitation failed, was tortured to satisfy the reigning fashion. They ransacked for comparisons the heavens above, the earth beneath, the waters under the earth, and the historical and mythical generations of earth's inhabitants. The wit of those days viewed the whole world as so much figurative material; he knew it as a painter knows his box of colours, or an enthusiastic botanist the flora of his own parish.

"That was the sort of fermentation likely to produce great masters of words. To call a spade a spade is a most benumb-

ing and stifling maxim to literary genius; and Elizabethans would not have called a spade a spade if he could possibly have found anything else to call it

"The number of words used by Shakespeare is said to be 15,000; and the prodigious magnitude of this number is usually brought out by comparing it to Milton's number, which is 8,000. We might say to him as Katherine said to Wolsey:

> Your words,
> Domestics to you, serve your will as't please
> Yourself pronounce their office ;

and add that his verbal establishment was upon an unparalleled scale. To some extent, indeed, it would seem that those hosts of servants were too officious; obtruding their services in such jostling numbers as to embarrass operations. It would appear as if, when Shakespeare set in the heat of composition, every word in the sentence just penned overwhelmed him with its associations; so perfectly were his intellectual forces mobilised, and so fresh and eager were their employment. And besides these officious troops of words, he had in his service troops of images no less officious, no less ready to appear upon the slightest hint. Upon the slightest hint that they were wanted, they came flashing in with the lightning excitement from all quarters, from pages of poems, histories, and even compendiums, from echoes of the stage, from all regions of earth and sky that he had seen or realised in thought.

"M. Taine lays most stress upon the copiousness of Shakespeare's imagery. 'It is a series of paintings which is unfolded in his mind. He does not seek them, they come of themselves; they crowd within him, covering his arguments; they dim with their brightness the pure light of logic. He does not labour to explain or prove; picture on picture, image on image, he is for copying the strange and splendid visions which are engendered one within another, and are heaped up within him.'

"Now I am not prepared to admit that Shakespeare's argumentative faculty was thus overwhelmed by the enthusiasm of imagery. If the dramatist's mind had been too much carried away by the imagination of the splendid portents, the blazing meteors, and feverish earthquakes, that pre-figured Glendower's birth, to be capable of meeting it with Hotspur's rejoinder, conceived on the soundest principles of inductive philosophy; the fascination of the fiery heaven and shaking earth would have prevented him from seeing that the same things might

have happened if Glendower's mother cat had but kittened though himself had never been born. That is a typical instance of logical faculty rising superior to the engrossing force of imagination. Apart, however, from that, I am of opinion that M. Taine exaggerates the pictorical side of Shakespeare's genius. It doubtless affords a very plausible explanation of Shakespeare's mixed metaphors to say that they were produced by the press and crush of thronging images; as his liberties with grammatical usage arose from over-abundance of strong pressure of words. But there is reason to believe that Shakespeare, like every other great verbal artist, took more delight in words than in forms and colours, as a painter takes more delight in forms and colours than in words and: and that he was tempted both to mixed metaphors and to violations of grammatical usage by a desire for fresh and startling combinations of words. This thirst of his ear for new conjunctions overpowered every other consideration. When he was importuned by several images at once, he knocked two or three of them forcibly together; but I believe that the temptation to do so came chiefly from his delight in the new marriage of words thus consummated".

George Rylands, referring to Shakespeare's fondness of the exuberant use of words and images in his early plays, and his progress in their disciplined use, has also observed in the book, *A Companion to Shakespeare Studies* : "This passion for either spinning out an image or accumulating diverse images to illustrate a single idea is very dominant in Shakespeare's early work. It is a dangerous passion, for as often as not it dissipates instead of concentrating the emotion. In the narrative poems it is not fatal. Crabb Robinson once observed acutely, 'To object to the poet a want of progress is as absurd as to object to the dancer that he does not get on. In both alike the object is to give delight by not getting on.' But it mars the Hubert scene in *King John* when the boy says,

> There is no malice in this burning coal ;
> The breath of Heaven has blown his spirit out
> And strew'd repentant ashes on his head.

And he does not rest here. It mars some important passage in *Romeo and Juliet*, passages that can only be allowed as an ephemeral convention, for example the line,

> What says
> My concealed lady to my cancelled love ?

Matthew Arnold complains of Shakespeare's irritability of fancy and over-curiousness of expression as the prepondering qualities of which all modern poetry has felt the influence, in which composition is sacrificed to detail. And Dr. Johnson close a magnificent indictment with the sentence: 'A quibble was to him the fatal Cleopatra for which he lost the world and was content to lose it.' The passion was, however, a youthful one. Conceit and simile give way to metaphor. Ornament ceases to be calligraphic, to be ornament for ornament's sake: it becomes functional and organic. For example, the sonnet,

> That time of year thou may'st in me behold
> When yellow leaves, or none, or few, do hang
> Upon those boughs which shake against cold

becomes dramatically

> My way of life
> Is fallen into the seer, the yellow leaf,

and the 'out, out, brief candle' of the same speaker looks back to Gaunt's

> My oil-dried lamp and time-bestrewed light
> Shall be extinct with age and endless night,
> My inch of taper shall be burnt and done."

Shakespeare is in the habit of using recurrent or dominating images in his plays. They play a part in raising, developing, sustaining, and repeating emotion in his plays, which is somewhat analogous to the action of a recurrent theme or 'motif' in a musical composition. Caroline Spurgeon, in her brilliant essay in "Leading Motives in the Imagery of Shakespeare's Tragedies" included in Anne Ridler's *Shakespeare Criticism*, has observed: "Perhaps, however, a more exact analogy to the function of Shakespeare's images in this respect is the unique work of another great artist, of the peculiar quality of which they constantly remind one, that is, Blake's illustration to his prophetic books. These are not, for the most part, illustrations in the ordinary sense of the term, the translation by the artist of some incident in the narrative into a visual picture; they are rather a running accompaniment to the words in another medium, sometimes symbolically emphasising or interpreting certain aspects of the thought, sometimes supplying frankly only decoration or atmosphere, sometimes grotesque and even repellent, vivid, strange, arresting, sometimes drawn with an almost unearthly beauty of form and colour. Thus, as the leaping tongues of flame which illuminate the pages of *The Marriage*

of Heaven and Hell show, the visual form which Blake's thought evoked in his mind, and symbolise for us the purity, the beauty, and the two-edged quality of life and danger in his words, so the recurrent images in *Macbeth* or *Hamlet* reveal the dominant picture or sensation—and for Shakespeare the two are identical—in terms of which he sees and feels the main problem or theme of the play, thus giving us an unerring clue to the way he looked at it, as well as direct glimpse into the working of his mind and imagination.

"These dominant images are a characteristic of Shakespeare's work throughout, but whereas in the earlier plays they are of the rather obvious, taken over in some cases with the story itself from a hint in the original narrative in the later plays, and especially in the great tragedies, they are born of the emotions of the theme, and are, as in *Macbeth*, subtle, complex, varied but intensely vivid and revealing; or as in *Lear*, so constant and all pervading as be reiterated, not only in the word-pictures, but also in the single words themselves."

Analysing the images in the various plays, Caroline Spurgeon has found that each of Shakespeare's plays has a group of dominating images, and in addition to this normal grouping, she has found, 'especially in tragedies, certain groups of images which, as it were, stick out in each particular play and immediately attract attention because they are peculiar either in subject or quality, or both.' Dealing with the various plays she points out:

"In *Romeo and Juliet* the dominating image is *light*, every form and manifestation of it: the sun, moon, stars fire, lightening, the flash of gunpowder, and the reflected light of beauty and of love; while by contrast we have night, darkness, clouds, rain, mist, and smoke. In this play the beauty and ardour of young love is seen by Shakespeare as the irradiating glory of sunlight in a dark world......

"In *Hamlet*, naturally, we find ourselves in an entirely different atmosphere, and if we look closely we see this partly due to the number of images of sickness, disease, or blemish of the body in the play, and we discover that the idea of an ulcer or tumour, as descriptive of the unwholesome condition of Denmark morally, is, on the whole, the dominating one...... In marked contrast to *Lear*, though bodily disease is emphasised, bodily action and strain are little drawn upon; indeed, only in Hamlet's great speech as it brought before us all (*to be shot at* with slings and arrows, *to take arms against* troubles and oppose

them, *to suffer* shocks, *to bear* the lash of whips, and *endure* pangs, to grunt and sweat under burdens, and so on), and here, as in *Lear*, it serves to intensify the feeling of mental anguish. In *Hamlet*, however, anguish is not the dominating thought, but *rottenness*, disease, corruption, the result of *dirt*; the people are 'muddied'.

Thick and unwholesome in their thoughts and whispers,

and this corruption is, in the words of Claudius, 'rank', and 'smells to heaven', so that the state of things in Denmark which shocks, paralyses, and finally overwhelms Hamlet, is as the foul tumour breaking inwardly and poisoning the whole body, while showing,

no cause without
Why the man dies.

Thus to Shakespeare's pictorial imagination, the problem in Hamlet is not predominantly that of will and reason, of a mind too philosophic or a nature temperamentally unfitted to act quickly; he sees it pictorially, *not at the problem of an individual at all*, but as something greater and even more mysterious, as *a condition* for which the individual himself is apparently not responsible, any more than the sick man is to blame for the cancer which strikes and devours him, but which, nevertheless, in its course and development impartially and relentlessly annihilates him and others, innocent and guilty alike. That is the tragedy of Hamlet, as it is perhaps, the chief tragic mystery of life.

"In *Macbeth* the ideas in the imagery are in themselves more imaginative, more subtle and complex than in other plays, and there are a greater number of them, interwoven the one with the other, recurring and repeating. There are at least four of these main ideas.... The first idea that constantly recurs is that Macbeth's new honours sit ill upon him, like a loose garment belonging to some one else. Macbeth himself first expresses it, quite early in the play, when, immediately following the first appearance of the witches and their prophecies, Ross arrives from the King and greets him as thane of Cawdor, to which Macbeth quickly replies,

The thane of Cawdor lives: why do you dress me
In borrowed robes?

and a few minutes later, when he is rapt in ambitious thoughts suggested by the confirmation of two out of the three 'prophetic greetings,' Banquo, matching him murmurs,

> Now honours come upon him,
> Like our strange garments, cleave not their mould
> But with the aid of use.

Angus, in a similar image, vividly sums up the essence of what they all have been thinking ever since Macbeth's accession to power,

> now does he feel his title
> Hang loose about him, like a giant's robe
> Upon a dwarfish thief.

"Another image or idea which runs through *Macbeth* is the reverberation of sound echoing over vast regions, even into the limitless spaces beyond the confines of the world......Macbeth himself, like Hamlet, is fully conscious of how impossible it is to 'trammle up the consequence' of his deed, and by his magnificent images of angels pleading trumpet-tongued, pity, like naked newborn babe striding the blast,

> or heaven's cherubin horsed
> Upon the sightless couriers of the air,

who

> Shall blow the horrid deed in every eye,
> That tears shall drown the wind,

he fills our imagination with the picture of its being broadcast through great spaces with reverberating sound.

"This is taken up again by Madcuff, when he cries,

> each new morn
> New widows howl, new orphans, new sorrows
> Strike heaven on the face, that it resounds
> As if it felt with Scotland and yell'd out
> Like syllable of colour,

and again by Ross, when he is trying to break the terrible news of Macbeth's latest murders to Madcuff—the destruction of his own wife and children—

> I have words
> That would be howl'd out in the desert air,
> Where hearing should not latch them.

One can scarcely conceive a more vivid picture of the vastness of space than this, and of the overwhelming and unending nature of the consequences of the evil deed.

"Another constant idea in the play arises out of the symbolism that light stands for life, virtue, goodness and darkness for evil and death. 'Angels are bright,' the witches are 'secret, black and mid-night hags,' and as Dowden says, the movement

of the whole play might be summed up in the words, 'good things of day begin to droop and drowse'......

"The fourth of the chief symbolic ideas in the play is one which is very constant with Shakespeare and is to be found all through his work, that sin is a disease—Scotland is sick........ Malcom speaks of his country as weeping, bleeding and wounded, and later urges macduff to

> make us medicines of our great revenge,
> To cure this deadly grief,

while Caithness calls Malcom himself the 'medicine of the sickly weal', 'the country's purge.'

"The main image of Othello is that of animals in action, preying upon one another, mischievous, lascivious, cruel, or suffering and through these, the general sense of pain and unpleasantness is much increased and kept constantly before us...... More than half the animal images in the play are Iago's, and all these are contemptuous or repellant, a plague of flies, a quarrelsome dog, the recurrent image of bird-snaring. leading asses by the nose, a spider catching a fly, beating an offenceless dog, wild cats, wolves, goats, and monkeys....To this Othello adds his pictures of foul toads breeding in a cistern, summer flies in the shambles, the ill-boding raven over the infected house, to toad in a dungeon, the monster 'too hideous to be shown.......

"It is interesting to compare the animal imagery in *Othello* with that in *Lear*. The plays have certain likenesses; they were written near together, they are the most painful tragedies, and they are both studies of torture. But the torture in *Lear* is on so vast and so inhuman a scale, the cruelty of child to parent in the doubly repeated plot is so relentless and ferocious, that the jealous and petty malignity of Iago shrinks beside it.

"This difference in scale is expressed in the animal imagery. In *Othello* we see a low type of life, insects and reptiles swarming and preying on each other, not out of special ferocity but just in accordance with their natural instincts, mischievous and irresponsible wild cats, goats, monkeys, or the harmless innocent animals trapped or beaten. This reflects and repeats the spectacle of the wanton torture of one human being by another which we witness in the tragedy, the human spider and the fly; whereas in *Lear* our imagination is filled with the accumulated pictures of active ferocity, of wolf, tiger, wild boar, vulture, serpent, and sea-mother, all animals of a certain dignity and grandeur, though seen here only when

their desires
Are wolfish, bloody, starved and ravenous.

This represents the terrific scale of the suffering in *Lear*, which makes us feel—as we never do in *Othello*—that the vileness of humanity is so great, so unchecked and universal, that if the gods do not intervene the end of such horrors must come and

Humanity must perforce prey on itself,
Like monsters of the deep.

But the gods, who 'keep his dreadful pother', do not intervene, and the most terrible lines in Shakespeare are those breathed by Gloucester in his agony, when he attributes to the gods themselves in their dealings with men, not only indifference and callousness, but the sheer wanton delight in torture, which in *Othello* we see exercised only by one human being on another.

"The intensity of feeling and emotion in *Lear*, and the sharpness of its focus is revealed by the fact that in Shakespeare's imagination there runs throughout only one overpowering and dominating continuous image. So compelling is this that even well-marked different and subsidiary images are pressed into its service and used to augment and emphasise it.

"In this play we are conscious all through of the atmosphere of buffeting, strain and strife and at moments, of bodily tension to the point of agony. So naturally does this flow from the circumstances of the drama and the mental suffering of Lear, that we scarcely realise how greatly this sensation in us is increased by the general 'floating' image, kept constantly before us, chiefly by means of the verbs used but also in metaphor, of a human body in anguished movement, tugged-wrenched, beaten, pierced, stung, scourged, dislocated, flayed, gashed, scolded, tortured and finally broken on the rack.

"One can scarcely open a page of the play without being struck by these images and verbs, for every kind of bodily movement, generally involving pain, is used to express mental and abstract as well as physical facts. To name only a few of them, Lear, in his agonised remorse, pictures himself as a man *wrenched* and tortured by an 'engine', beating at the gate (his head) and let his folly in. Goneril has power to *shake* his manhood; he complains that she has *struck* him with her tongue; the hot tears *break* from him; his heart, he says, *will break into a hundred thousand flaws.*"

In the end of the essay, Caroline Spurgeon remarks: "No other writer, so far as I know, certainly no other dramatist, makes such continual use of the running and recurrent symbols as does Shakespeare.......Shelley, in his *Prometheus Unbound*, perhaps romes nearer to it when he brings out and emphasises by means of nature-imagery, certain philosophio and ethical thoughts; but the *Prometheus*, though nominally a drama, is really a lyrical poem in a single mood, which lends itself far more readily to such continuity of symbolism than do Shakespeare's varied and tremendous dramas.

"This method of working by way of suggestion, springing from a succession of vivid pictures and concrete details, is, of course, of the very essence of 'romantic' art; and, in the case of Shakespeare, the poet's mind, unlike under the dyer's hand, subdues to itself what it works in, and colours with its dominating emotion all the varied material which comes his way, colours it so subtly and so delicately that for the most part we are unconscious of what is happening, and know only the total result of the effect on our imaginative sensibility.

"Hence it seems to me that a study of his imagery from the angle from which we have just been looking at, it helps us to realise a little more fully and accurately one of the many ways by which he so magically stirs our emotions and excites our imagination, and I believe it not only does this, but that it sometimes even throws a fresh ray of light on the significance of the play concerned, and—most important of all—on the way Shakespeare himself saw it."

6. SHAKESPEARE AND MUSIC

In the age of Shakespeare music reached an extraordinary high artistic level both in England and Europe. Not only it was an age of great composers all over Europe, but music was then widely cultivated and appreciated. In the medieval days music had been centred mainly in the cathedrals and monasteries. Outside these environments domestic life was neither so secure nor comfortable as to permit of any serious and continuous cultivation of the art by the common people. With the beginning of the Renaissance and the invention of printing, musical culture spread to much wider circles. Italy set the example to all Courts of Europe, and the English Court, from the time of Henry VIII to that of Elizabeth, took an active interest in music. Henry VII was himself a composer; Edward VI played the

lute well and his sisters Mary and Elizabeth were both accomplished performers.

Regarding the place of music in the Elizabethan theatre and Shakespeare's employment of it in his plays, E. J. Dent writes in h s essay, "Shakespeare and Musid,' in the book *Companion to Shakespeare Studies*: "In the public theatres, and almost certainly in the private ones, the normal place for the music was a curtained box called the 'music room': a part of the gallery which ran at the back. and, in the later theatres, probably turned to enclose part of the side of the stage. But the musicians were often required to play on the stage itself, and there are instances (as in *Antony and Cleopatra*) where they played under the stage......Add the undoubted fact that from the beginning music was always considered an attraction, and that as much of it, if not of one k'nd then another, would be provided as possible; that certain of the actors themselves were evidently capable of playing some instrument when required, and that most professional musicians were capable of playing two or more different instruments.

"There can be no doubt whatever that Shakespeare himself had a very considerable knowledge of music. His poems and plays are full of allusions to the art; not only does he speak of music plainly and directly, but he very often mentions technical musical terms in a metaphorical sense. But whereas writers of the nineteenth century seldom mention music without committing some ridiculous error, Shakespeare never makes a mistake, even when he alludes to theoretical details of a difficult and obscure kind. How Shakespeare acquired his knowledge of music can only be conjectured. He would probably have learned the rudiment of music, including sight-singing, at school at Stratford; it is also quite probable that he might have found someone there to teach him to play the lute and possibly the virginals, if not the recorder. We have, however, no evidence as to his abilities as a performer, either instrumental or vocal......

"The music employed in Shakespeare's plays may be classed in three groups—fanfares, dances and songs. The first category includes all the indications of trumpet calls, such as alarms, retreats and tuckets, as well as marches of drums. Music of this type is naturally associated with battles; otherwise the trumpets are reserved for situations connected with kings and princes or other persons of high degree. The very obscure term *sonnet* has never been satisfactorily explained, but it is

evident that it must have been a long piece of music, as compared with flourishes, etc. Under the heading of dances we may conveniently class all indications of purely instrumental music, whether required for dancing or not, for in Shakespeare's time most of the serious instrumental music composed was written in forms derived from the dance. There is no evidence extant as to the actual pieces of music played at the original performance of Shakespeare's dramas. There were trumpet flourishes, but they are probably all of later date and mostly from continental sources. For the dance music of the period there is abundant choice of material, but care must be taken to distinguish between music written definitely for dancing and music which utilises the conventional dance forms for purely artistic purposes.

"Shakespeare's use of songs in the plays varies considerably, and it is one of the many, though uncertain, indications of the circumstances of a play's production and the resources at the moment of his company.

"In *Love's Labour's Lost* the small boy played Moth song, it seems, what was probably an Irish song, its title in the text corrupted to 'Concolinel'. In *Henry IV*, written a very few years later, the boy who played Glendower's daughter had to sing a song in Welsh. The association of the two things may not be accidental. The songs at the end of *Love's Labour's Lost*, not specially given to any of the characters, are likely to have been sung by Moth and another boy. In *The Two Gentlemen of Verona* and *The Merchant of Venice* solo singers (in the first certainly adult, in the second probably) come on for the occasion only. We infer—but we must not be too certain—that they were engaged for the particular purpose and occasion. In *The Merchant of Venice* some of the minor actors and attendants 'bear the burden', *i.e.*, sing the chorus. But very few Elizabethans, on the stage or off, would not have been able to do that respectably. In *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and *The Merry Wives of Windsor* the singers (and dancers) seem to be children, and a fair number of them would be needed. But these two plays, it is agreed, were written for special occasions—there is indeed no evidence that they were ever seen upon the public stage at all—and for such occasions children could be easily recruited.

"*In Much Ado About Nothing* and *As You Like it* the (obviously adult) solo singer is a character in the play; a quite

unimportant one, but his few lines would need speaking well. There is, it is possible to argue, a hint in *Much Ado About Nothing*, that he was not even a very expert singer. But music abounds in these two comedies. There are two dances in *Much Ado About Nothing* and in *As You Like It* two boy singers besides Amiens. Touchstone can sing also; and there is a masque, which demands 'still music'..... *Twelfth Night* follows close upon them, and again abounds in music. There is the music played to the moody Count Orsino; there are catches sung by Sir Toby and Sir Andrew; there are above all Feste's songs, three of them. Nor was this the actor who sang as Balthazar and Amiens, but (we may almost be sure) Robert Armin, the company's new clown.

"We are now in the period of the great tragedies, and while the songs are few they have acquired a very definite dramatic function. They are associated with abnormal states of mind, as with Ophelia and—since he is pretending to be mad—with Edgar in *King Lear*. No originality, of course, can be claimed for Shakespeare in this. Mad people sing snatches of song in other plays, and so, very often, do people when they are distraught in real life. He uses music as one of the means to restoring the suffering King Lear to sanity. This is a trifle more remarkable; but from the days of David and Saul music has been held to have something of that power. He uses music to hold Leontes spellbound while the statue of Hermione comes to life; but it has always played its part, on the stage and off, when any sort of magic is working. With far subtler art he uses Desdemona's song, both to show us her suffering wrought at the moment to a point beyond all human expression, and to insert, for contrast, a touch of quiet beauty before the brutal horror of her murder comes.

"Music has its share in the comedies of the last period too. In *The Winter's Tale*, Autolycus the itinerant ballad-vendor (the type stil survives) and thief, who must sing his songs to sell them, demands an actor who can sing, and sing well. In *Cymbeline*, besides the aubade, we have the curious touch of the 'ingenious instrument' in Belisarius's cave, which will play music if you 'give it motion'....*The Tempest*, last of the plays, and half masque in spirit and form, naturally abounds in music. Nor has Shakespeare ever used it more dramatically. But never once does it dominate the play. As Prospero holds Ariel captive, so does Shakespeare keep music the servant of his drama still.

"Shakespeare, for all his knowledge of music and sensitiveness to the theatrical value of music, never adopts the principle of opera. Mr. Percy Scholew, starting from the very reasonable basis that music in Shakespeare was often associated with magic and the supernatural, worked out an ingenious theory that Shakespeare's use of music was invariably intended to signify some abnormal psychological state. This theory, however, has not found favour with Shakespearean scholars. The association of the music with the supernatural goes back, it need hardly be said, to very ancient times, and in this case Shakespeare did not more than follow a tradition ready to hand. Music was obviously an attraction to Elizabethan audiences, and it has been shown that the Shakespearean theatre eventually became sufficiently prosperous to be able to hire as many musicians as might be wanted. The musical element is most conspicuous in *The Tempest*, and *The Tempest* is a play abounding in effects of magic. Whether Shakespeare wrote the play in order to make copious use of music, or whether he employed music because it was appropriate to that particular dramatic idea, is a question which can only be answered by conjectural speculation. The function of the songs in the part of Ariel would seem to be to distinguish him as a supernatural character from the ordinary mortals; this at any rate was the view of Dryden. If Shakespeare had had any conception of the Italian operatic principle he would have made Hamlet or Othello burst into melody at the moments of crisis. Those of his characters who are generally provided with songs are intended to represent persons who, if they had existed as real people, would have learned music as an accomplishment and have been ready to sing when occasion required either as a social entertainer like Feste or a vendor of ballads like Autolycus.

"From the operatic point of view music is the normal language in which human intercourse is carried on; Shakespeare, however, except perhaps in the case of Ariel, and the fairies in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, gets no nearer to this principle than the adoption of poetry as a normal language. Music is for him always something extraneous as it is in ordinary life. A composer of opera regards his characters as creating the music which they sing out of their own emotions; Shakespeare is concerned only with the effect of music on those who listen to it. His listeners are not his audience alone, but in all cases the characters on the stage as well. We may include among the listeners even those who sing, for they sing (as many

people habitually do unless they are professional musicians) for the pleasure of singing. It is an attitude of reception, not of creation."

7. SHAKESPEARE'S USE OF PROSE

Regarding Shakespeare's use of prose, Ward writes in his book, *A History of English Dramatic Literature*, Vol. II: "The use on the English stage of prose as a vehicle of expression entitled to equal rights with verse was due to Lyly, though it had not been originally introduced by him. Shakespeare, together with most of his contemporaries among our dramatists, was evidently under the influence of Lyly's prose; but the limits within which he admitted its operation may be worth observing. In Shakespeare's prose, three varieties may conveniently be distinguished. First, we have the speech of the clowns and their fellows, which in phraseology and construction is the speech of the people, and abounds in such reminiscences as those adverted to above. Secondly, we have essentially the euphuistic style, features of which are in Shakespeare's earlier dramas at times undoubtedly introduced in order to ridicule it, but occur in his later plays without any such purpose and in full seriousness, where information is to be given to the spectators as to the nature of the situation, or where a specially solemn and ceremonious tone is intended. Here, beyond doubt, Shakespeare was consciously employing that elaborate species of phraseology and balanced cadence of speech peculiar to the good society of his age, of which Lyly's style was the English prototype. Lastly, there is the humorous prose spoken as a rule (though not exclusively) by personages of superior rank or importance—the prose of high comedy, as one may venture to call it. Suggested in form by the dialogues of Lyly, these Shakespearean conversations—of which the wit-combats in *Much Ado About Nothing* furnish the most signal example—are very far from being essentially euphuistic; and in no branch of dramatic writing was the advance made by Shakespeare more remarkable, while none of his Elizabethan contemporaries approached him in the combination of elegance, lightness; and point which he here displayed. With all his power of observation and wit, Ben Jonson fell short of a similarly consummate success; Beaumont and Fletcher have been judged to have 'copied more faithfully than Shakespeare the language of the Court and the Mall,' but the question is whether, so to speak the company which they kept there was of the very best. But I would rather cry a truce in the matter. What seems incontrovertible is that

the prose form of English high comedy has its first model in Shakespeare."

Shakespeare wrote his best prose during the period which divides *King John* from *Hamlet*. In this connection Reese writes in his book, *Shakespeare*: "During this period his prose has a concentration which so far he has but seldom managed to attain in verse; and prose, hitherto accepted in English drama as the medium for low-born persons and clowns, for the moment ousts verse as the means of portraying dramatic character. Of course much of the prose in these particular plays is spoken by clowns, and all of it is mannered but some of it is passionate too; and it is in this experimental phase that Shakespeare shows that he has at length recognised the supreme needs of drama. Now he is not merely laughing at poetising, he has succeeded in banishing it. Shylock speaks prose: not always but, significantly, when he is most in need of words.

> Hath not a Jew eyes? hath not a Jew organs, dimensions, senses, affections, passions? fed with the same food, hurt with the same weapons, subject to the same diseases, healed by the same means, warmed and cooled by the same winter and summer, as a Christian is? If you prick us, do we not bleed?......

> The curse never fell upon our nation till now; I never felt it till now: two thousand ducats in that; and other precious jewels. I would by daughter were dead at my foot, and the jewels in her ear! would she were hearsed at my foot, and the ducats in her coffin!....no ill luck stirring, but what lights on my shoulders; no sighs but of my breathing; no tears but of my shedding.

Prose is the medium of Falstaff as well as of the lighter comedians he gathers about him; of Henry V in his most revealing moments, when he sheds, so far he ever can, the formal robes of office and thinks and talks like a man; of the duels and love of Benedick and Beatrice; of Rosalind both in her intimate gossip with Celia and when she bandies love with Orlando. Prose at this time was made to carry a heavier weight of thought and emotion than, in drama, it had ever done before."

8. SHAKESPEARE'S DRAMATIC CAREER

Some critics who consider Shakespeare as the supreme poet of all times are of the opinion that he was subject to no law or rule, and that it is silly to trace the development of his dramatic art, as he being a born poet and dramatist was perfect in his art from the very beginning of his dramatic career. This is not a proper approach to the study of Shakespeare, nor is it

just to take it for granted that he showed no signs of development, because it is no discredit to a great artist to discover that he attained maturity after early apprenticeship and experiments in his art. In this connection Boas has observed in his book, *Shakespeare and His Predecessors*: "In the investigation of Shakespeare's personal career critical inquiry will readily be allowed, but when we turn to speak of him as a dramatist the legitimacy of such a method may be challenged at the outset. There is a venerable prejudice which clings to the idea that poetic genius is something entirely unaccountable and wayward, subject to no law or rule. To search for its secret is merely to profane a mystery; and of Shakespeare, as the supreme poet of all time, it may be said, holds especially true; he is a stupendous phenomenon, to be accepted with awe and thanksgiving. His plays should be read in any and every order, each for its own inherent beauty, and all attempts to arrange them in groups, and thence to infer the development of their author's mind, are an offence against true aesthetic principles.

"Such a view has in it a kernel of truth that cannot be disregarded; it calls to remembrance that after all 'the play's the thing', and that critical knowledge is dearly bought at any sacrifice of pure and spontaneous delight in the creation of art. It also pushes home the fact that the ultimate secret of genius defines the most rigid analysis and that no study of antecedents and environment, no skilful classification and chronologies will ever make it clearer why Shakespeare was what he was, and not merely a Mårlowe or a Greene. Ben Jonson himself, in those memorial lines which are the first, as they are one of the best, of commentaries on Shakespeare, declares that 'a good poet's made as well born'. It is this process of 'making' through which even the inspired singer must pass that justifies the application of the critical method to the dramatist's writings. The distinguishing mark of that method is its endeavour to arrange the plays in the order of their production, to note their mutual points of contact or of contrast, and to interpret them as a progressive revelation of their author's genius. From this point of view the dramas cease to be a mechanical aggregate, and shape themselves into an organic whole. But just as in an organism the individual members gain instead of lose by their union in a higher life, so each separate play adds to its interest and significance when seen in its relation to every other. The passion of *Romeo and Juliet*, the charm of *As*

You Like It, the mystery of *Hamlet*, the terror of *King Lear* are one and all enhanced when we realise that they are not due to accident, but form the stages in a continuous mental growth. It is true, of course, that the results of such a method of inquiry cannot be all equally definite and dogmatic, and that criticism sometimes cuts an ungainly figure as it toils along, with its club foot, in the track of creative art. But when all deductions are made, the study of Shakespeare's works in their natural sequence must approve itself to every lover of literature by its pre-eminent interest and fruitfulness."

Regarding the available means by which we can fix the chronological order of Shakespeare's plays, Boas has observed: "A preliminary question, however, at once starts up: Can the order of the plays be determined with sufficient accuracy for chronological criticism to be anything better than ingenious guesswork? Upon the main issue an affirmative answer may be confidently given, though in details there is considerable doubt. The evidence for fixing the dates of the drama may be divided broadly into two classes, external and internal. Under the former head comes first the entry of certain of Shakespeare's works in the register of the Stationers' Company. The first complete collection of his writings (with the exception of parts of *Pericles* and possibly of *The Two Noble Kinsmen*) was the folio of 1623 edited by his fellow actors Heminge and Condell. But during his lifetime seventeen of the plays and all the poems were issued in quarto form, and they were registered either on or shortly before publication. We thus get a downward limit before which these works must have been written, and a similar limit fixed by the other branch of external evidence, which consists in contemporary allusions to the dramas. For the most important of these is the well-known passage in Meres' *Palladis Tamia*, 1598. Meres there mentions as already existing six of Shakespeare's comedies, *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*, *The Comedy of Errors*, *Love's Labour's Lost*, *Love's Labour's Won*, *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and *The Merchant of Venice*; and six of his tragedies, *Richard II*, *Richard III*, *Henry IV*, *King John*, *Titus Andronicus* and *Romeo and Juliet*. As Meres cites these works with the express purpose of proving Shakespeare's excellence as a writer for the stage, it is very unlikely that he left out any play of importance and the inference is almost certain that all the dramas not mentioned by him were later than 1598. Minor references in other contemporary writings

help to fix the date of *Twelfth N'ght, Julius Caesar, Macbeth, The Winter's Tale* and *King Henry VIII.*

"Under the head of internal evidence we may place first the few allusions in the plays to contemporary historical events. Of these the most important is the reference to Essex's Irish expedit'on, in 1599, in a chorus to *Henry V*, while in the prologue to the same drama mention is made of the recently built Globe Theatre as 'this wooden O!" Other less precise allusions do something to place *The Comedy of Errors, The Merry Wives of Windsor*, and *Romeo and Jul'et.* Similar to these historical references are to those books issued during Shakes-peare's life. Thus, in *As You Like It*, a line quoted from Marlowe's *Hero and Leader* publ'shed in 1508, while *King Lear* and *The Tempest* show debts respectively to Harnet's *Declar-ation of Popish Impostures*, and Florio's Translation of Mon-taigne's *Essays* both belonging to 1603. In all these cases an up-ward limit is established after which the plays must have been written.

"The other more strictly internal evidence is less concrete, but, if cautiously handled, furnishes sufficiently definite results. It consists in the changes that Shakespeare's dramatic style underwent during his long career of authorship. Of these the most unmistakable are the various gradual alterations in the character of his verse. In the earlier dramas it has an even, and often monotonous, flow; there is a pause at the end of nearly every line, and the movement of the longer passages is lacking in variety and freedom. But, as he continued to write, Shakespeare felt his way to more intricate and subtle rhythms; he varied his pauses, and ran on the sense without a break from verse to verse. This tendency grew upon him with constantly increasing force, so that in the latest plays the periods are often extremely prolonged and complicated. Closely connected with th's change are others of a subsidiary kind. When the sense pauses, with each verse, the final syllable will naturally be strongly accented; but when one line runs on to combine with its successor, it more naturally terminates with some unimportant word which is no obstacle to union. And thus, in the later plays, an increasing number of lines have 'weak' endings, *i.e.*, they close with some trifling monosyllable which leans for support on the opening word of the following verse. Ingram distinguishes between the 'light endings', consis-ting of aux liary verbs and pronouns (*e.g.*, am, do, I), on which the voice can to a small extent dwell, and the 'weak endings',

including conjunctions and prepositions (*e.g.*, for, if, in), on which the reader cannot pause at all. Light endings frequently appear first in *Macbeth*, and weak endings in *Antony and Cleopatra*. Allied to the weak endings the lines consist almost uniformly of ten syllables, but as Shakespeare's style progressed to greater freedom, an extra syllable was frequently added to give variety to the rhythm, so that in the closing dramas almost one verse in three is distinguished in this way.

"With these changes is connected the gradual disuse of rhyme At first he often employed it, especially in his comedies, but as his art matured, he discarded it by degrees for blank verse or for prose except in certain passages where he introduced it for a special purpose. Thus the proportion of rhyme in a play is a test which, if discreetly applied, helps to decide whether it is early or late. With the decrease of rhyme there disappeared the sonnets, quatrains, and snatches of doggerel which at first had found their way into the dialogue.

"Other immaturities, besides those of versification, cling to the earlier play they abound in conceits, puns, overwrought imagery, and excessive classical allusions. As yet, thought and imagination lagged behind fancy and power of expression. But gradually they came to the front, and took their rightful place in the dramatist's work; language, instead of being racked and stretched for want of matter, is found at the last staggering along under a burden of ideas almost beyond its power to bear."

Such external and internal evidences have furnished a basis for the division of the plays into groups. Though any such division cannot be final and authoritative, yet recent criticism has, for the most part, recognised four main stages in the development of Shakespeare's genius and art. His literary career began about 1588, and extended over a period of rather more than twenty years. Of these the first period consists of five or six years (1588–1594). It was a period of dramatic apprenticeship for Shakespeare. *Henry VI*, Part I, *Titus Andronicus*, *The Comedy of Errors*, *Love's Labour's Lost*, *Henry VI*, Part II, *Henry VI*, Part III, *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*, *Venus and Adonis*, *Richard III*, *The Rape of Lucrece*, *Richard II* and *Midsummer Night's Dream*. Regarding the works of Shakespeare during this period, Boas remarks: "Much of what he produced during this early period is of enduring interest and beauty, but everywhere there are marks of youth. The style is often crude and arti-

ficial; the power of characterisation is still rudimentary; the wit is sparkling and vivacious rather than subtle and refined; the pathos of life is recognised, but not its terror or mystery. Shakespeare is yet in his adolesence."

The second stage of Shakespeare's dramatic career lasted from 1595 to 1600. During this period he wrote *Romeo and Juliet, All's Well that Ends Well, King John, The Taming of the Shrew, The Merchant of Venice, Henry IV*, Part I, *Henry IV*, Part II, *The Merry Wives of Windsor, Henry V, Much Ada About Nothing, As You Like It*, and *Twelfth Night*. Estimating the development of Shakespeare's dramatic art during this period, Boas has pointed out, "His powers have now ripened, and to this period belongs much of his most flawless workmanship. His joyous strength and energy flow forth without stay or stint, and Falstaff and Prince Hal, Beatrice and Rosalind, spring into superb and radiant existence. Instead of imperfect sketches we have full-length portraits, showing a grasp of life and of character in deeper and more complex aspects than before. The splendid panorama of national history is unrolled before our eyes, and its moral issues are exhibited in clear and comprehensive working. Shakespeare is in full manhood, but his outlook is as yet not without limitations. Life still attracts him chiefly on its practical, mundane and material side. His world is one of sane and strenuous activities, of sweet and loyal affections which find their foil in cowardice, vanity, deceit, and hardness of heart".

The second period was mostly the period of historical plays which prepared Shakespeare's mind to deal with the great tragedies, which he was to write soon after. Referring to the influence exercised by historical studies upon the mind of Shakespeare, Dowden has observed in his book, *Shakespeare—His Mind and Art*: "The most important influence exercised by his dramatic studies in English history upon the mind of Shakespeare was that they engaged his imagination in an inquiry into the sources of power and of weakness, of success and of failure in a man's dealings with the positive, social world. They kept constantly before Shakespeare's mind the problem, 'How is man to obtain a mastery of the actual world, and in what ways may be fail of such a mastery?" This was a subject in which Shakespeare had a personal interest for he was himself resolved, as far as in him lay, not to fail in this material life of ours, but rather, if possible, to be for his own needs, a master of events. The portraits of English kings from King

John to King Henry V, are a series of studies of weakness and of strength for the attaining of kingly ends. To fail is the supreme sin. Worse almost than criminality is weakness, except that crime besides being crime, is itself a certain kind of weakness. Henry VI is a timid saint; it were better that he had been a man. Does his timid saintliness serve him in the place of energy of thought and will, or secure him from a miserable overthrow? It is important to observe the fundamental difference which exists between the series of English historical plays and the great series of tragedies, beginning with *Hamlet*, ending, with *Timon of Athens*, in which Shakespeare embodied his ripest experience of life. In the historical plays the question which inevitably comes forward again and again is this, 'By what means shall a man attain the noblest practical success in the objective world?' In the great tragedies the problem is a spiritual one. It is still the problem of failure and success. But in these tragedies success means not any practical achievement in the world, but the perfected life of the soul, and failure means the ruin of the life of soul through passion or weakness, through calamity or crime."

Regarding the occasion of the writing of *As You Like It*, which is the last comedy of the second period of Shakespeare's dramatic career, Dowden writes: "Shakespeare, when he had completed his English historical plays, needed rest for his imagination; and in such a mood, craving refreshment and recreation, he wrote his play of *As You Like It*. To understand the spirit of this play, we must bear in mind that it was written immediately after Shakespeare's great series of histories, ending with *Henry V* (1599), and before he began the great series of tragedies. Shakespeare turned with a sigh of relief, and a long easeful sigh, from the oppressive subjects of history, so grave, so real, so massive, and found rest and freedom and pleasure in escape from courts and camps to the Forest of Arden:

> Who doth ambition shun,
> And loves to live i' the sun,
> "Come hither, come hither, come hither."

The third period of Shakespeare's dramatic career (1601-1608) is the period of great tragedies. In this period he wrote *Julius Casear Hamlet, Troilus and Cressida, Measure for Measure, Othello, King Lear, Timon of Athens, Macbeth, Pericles and Antony and Cleopatra.* Referring the works of this period Boas remarks, "This is the 'hell of time', during which, under the pressure of personal suffering, he

sounded the lowest abysses of our mortal lot, and gazed unappalled upon the awful spectacle of the guilty and the guiltless involved in a common doom, and of the nemesis following as restlessly upon error as upon crime. Hamlet, Brutus, Othello, Desdemona, Lear, Cordelia, Edmund, Macbeth, Timon, all alike die the death, and 'the rest is silence'. For seven years that grim vision floated before the poet's eyes, and the terror and pity of it would have driven weaker natures to despair. But Shakespeare was too strong to succumb even to the stress of such an ordeal, and at the last he struggled upwards once more to the light."

Regarding Shakespeare's mental and spiritual condition during the period of great tragedies, Dover Wilson writes in his book, *The Essential Shakespeare*: "If we look at Shakespeare's dramatic work from 1601 to 1608 as a whole, the conclusion is, I think, irresistible that for whatever cause, Shakespeare was subject at this time to a dominant mood of gloom and dejection, which on one occasion at least brought him to the verge of madness. One indication that this mood was

> Felt in the blood and felt along the heart,

and just not an artistic pose, is the nature of the comedies belonging to this period. When his company asked him for a comedy in 1600 he gave them *Twelfth Night;* in 1603 he could do nothing for them but *All's Well*, and followed it up next year with the equally acrid *Measure for Measure*, while though *Troilus and Cressida* was probably written for private performance in the autumn of 1600, it to some extent anticipates the other two. The note of them all is disillusionment and cynicism, the air is cheerless and often unwholesome, the wit mirthless, the bad characters contemptible or detestible, the good ones unattractive.

"The bitter comedies are intensely interesting as illustration of Shakespeare's mood, but they are a side-show. From 1601 to 1608 he is absorbed in tragedy, and the path he treads during these eight years may be likened to a mountain track which, rising gently from the plain, grows ever narrower, until at the climax of the ascent it dwindles to the thinnest razor-edge, a glacial arete, with the abyss on either hand and then once again grows secure for foothold as it broadens out and gradually descends into the valley beyond."

In the fourth and last period of his dramatic career (1608-1612), Shakespeare wrote *Coriolanus*, *Cymbeline*, *The*

Winter's Tale. . *The Tempest*, and *Henry VIII*. Regarding these plays Boas has remarked : "Nowhere in literature is there a more startling contrast than that between Shakespeare's closing group of dramas and the tragic series that precedes it. The fell images of sin and death vanish almost entirely from the scene, and the hand of the avenger ceases to claim its victims. The funeral notes of the dirge are hushed, and the air is filled with sweet and tender melodies whose themes are repentance, forgiveness, and reconciliation. Instead of a King Lear we have a Prospero, and Hermione and Imogen replace Cleopatra and Lady Macbeth. The spirit of these last plays cannot find fitter expression than in the words, 'At eventide it shall be light.'"

Referring to these last plays, Pinto writes in his book. *The English Renaissance*: "In the so-called 'romances' Shakespeare escapes from the impasse, not to the 'heights' as the Victorian critic said, but to a strange, unearthly world of poetic fantasy, the fairy-land of *Cymbeline* and *The Winter's* poetic fantasy, the fairy-land of *Cymbeline* and *The Winter's* *Tale*. He ended the great series of plays with *The Tempest*, one of the most astonishing of his creations, a myth rather than a fairy story which seems in one of its aspects to symbolise the artistic creation of the poet himself and in another the solution of the social problem by the beneficent 'magic' of science. If Tamburlaine is the Man of the Renaissance in all the vigour of a glorious and exultant youth, Prospero the magician who has learned to control both the elements and his own passions, is the supreme manifestation in poetry of the full-grown wisdom of humanism, a wisdom irradiated by imagination and endowed with a kind of prophetic quality, which also characterises the greatest sonnets in the famous collection published under Shakespeare's name in 1609.'

In spite of the changes which took place in his dramatic career, all the plays which Shakespeare wrote during the whole course of his authorship bear the stamp of his individuality. In this connection Boas has observed : "But while we thus note the changes through which Shakespeare's art and genius and temper passed, the converse fact must never be forgotten that his work throughout has a marvellous stamp of unity. Except a few plays, belonging chiefly to the beginning or end of his career, when he was collaborating with other writers or was touching up older materials, there is no one of his dramas which could conceivably have been written by another man.

This distinctively Shakespearean note depends upon a combination of characteristics, partly of style, partly of thought and motive, but its dominant feature is a majestic commonsense, an unfaltering eye for the true proportion of thing, a fidelity as constant as it is unobtrusive to the eternal, underlying principles of morality. Shakespeare is supreme and unique, not because he lacks every fault or possesses every excellence, but because the circle of his vision is so completely concentric with the orbit of the world's forces : he seems to stand at the core of the circumstance and to touch truth at its source. 'Shakespeare,' as Goethe said, 'has identified himself with the spirit of the Universe. He penetrates it as the spirit itself does: to both nothing is unrevealed.' Herein lies he secret of his individuality, for no man was ever less at pains to be original in the ordinary sense. He had in him nothing of the spirit of the reformer or the pioneer, and, instead of attempting to create new methods or instruments, he accepted those which he found current, and was content to follow in the paths which his predecessors had marked out. When he began his career of authorship, Romantic drama in all its leading types of tragedy, comedy, and history-play had already been popularised by Marlowe, Kyd and Greene, and Shakespeare threw himself into the prevailing fashion. Neither in subject-matter nor in treatment did he aim at novelty, and, as has been shown, hints of many of his leading incidents are scattered through the works of his immediate fore-runners. Thus Shakespeare became a romantic dramatist, not, as is sometimes represented, from conscious choice and after deliberately rejecting classical precepts, but simply because his creative activity flowed into the nearest and most natural channels."

9. SHAKESPEARE'S COMEDIES.

(a) Development of Shakespeare's Comic Art.

Shakespeare began his career as a dramatist by making plays in the prevailing fashion and following in the footsteps of the brilliant university men who were drawing crowds to the theatre. His first three comedies, *The Comedy of Errors*, *Love's Labour's Lost* and *The Two Gentlemen of Verona* clearly represent respectively the three types of comedy that was found prevailing about 1590, those of Plautus, Lyly and Greene.

In *The Comedy of Errors* Shakespeare followed the practice of Italian and English imitators of the Latin playwright. Lyly had also written a comedy, *Mother Bonbie*, of the

Roman type, but Shakespeare's play is superior to it and all other imitations of the Roman type in the ingenuity of plotting as also in its adaptability to the stage. In contrast, *Love's Labour's Lost* is undramatic and literary. Here Shakespeare, instead of following the well-tried model of the Roman farce, devised a drama along the lines of Lyly's scheme for a court entertainment, and thus bent all his energies to meeting that taste for refined and witty comedy which Lyly had fostered. The whole comedy, in fact, is a very fantasy of that word-play in which Shakespeare and his age so greatly delighted. Like Lyly, Shakespeare in this play mingles high comedy and low which is provided by a group of eccentric persons, but he surpassed Lyly in copiousness of wit and freedom of fancy. Having been written with the express purpose of entertainment, the play does not possess a closely-knit plot, nor a universal dramatic appeal. Its witticism and burlesque pleased its own age, and it has scarcely been heard upon the stage since Shakespeare's death. *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*, though it exhibits Lyly's influence, is an experiment in sentimental romance after the fashion of Greene. It was perhaps because this type of romantic play was far less developed dramatically than either the Plautian imitation or the Lylian court entertainment, that Shakespeare found it difficult to enrich the characters or to enliven the action. But this play has all the spirit and charm of Greene's comedies. Though the men are not drawn well, the characterisation of women is flawless. The two ladies, Silvia and Julia, are drawn magnificently. They possess independent characters and are the main movers of the action. As pointed out by Thorndike, "The play is less notable for what it achieves than for what it promises. The two heroines are the first sketches for the great portrait gallery of Shakespeare's women; every situation in which they find themselves was to receive later amplification and enrichment; all that Shakespeare could accomplish in his first attempt was to touch here and there with life the bare formula of dramatic romance."

Another play which belongs to Shakespeare's apprenticeship in comedy is *The Taming of the Shrew*. Here he drew the story from Italian imitations of Plautus, perhaps through the intermediary of English plays, and blended the medieval and classical farce into a play of enduring effectiveness. The elaborate tricks and disguises of the sub-plot of the play are characteristic of Italian-Roman comedy. Here Shakespeare

was revising, and rewriting, not inventing, though he introduced vigour, humour and manliness which relieve the tediousness and triviality of the farce, and did not lose sight of moral values.

In these first four comedies Shakespeare was simply imitating the modes of his contemporaries, but in his next comedy, *A Midsummer Night's Dream,* he produced an original play and far surpassed them in dramatic art. This play is his first great romantic comedy, and one of the masterpieces of the world's poetry. As pointed out by Thorndike, "There is no need to dilate on the charm and beauty of *A Midsummer Night's Dream.* Every one knows it and loves it, as we do the series of romantic comedies that followed. Every one knows, too, that it differs from Shakespeare's own *Love's Labour's Lost,* and *Two Gentlemen of Verona* as blossom from stalk or fairyland from an amusement park.........Yet our study has made plain that the way was prepared for the delightful comedy by years of dramatic experiment and that its rare beauty is no departure from type but rather a fulfilment. It was probably written at nearly the same time as *Romeo and Juliet;* and as that play adopts and transmutes the material and methods of current tragedy, so it consummates the efforts in court show and dramatisation of romance to create a national form of comedy. Both plays are the fruition of that creative impulse, aroused by old story and new dramatic opportunity, which had fired the imagination of Elizabethan playwrights, that impulse to romanticise life and to blend both its tragedy and comedy with beauty......Shakespeare's imagination was seizing on material and suggestions open to any dramatist of the time, and was following methods and technique that others and applied to comedy. The court show, developed and given established tradition by Lyly, now becomes transformed into a type of comedy that can only be described as Shakespearean".

"Shakespeare's next comedy was *The Merchant of Venice* which exhibited another development in his dramatic art. In this connection Thorndike writes: "If the trend in comedy that we have traced from the court show reached fulfilment in *the Dream* that other development from the dramatic translation of romance came to its Shakespearean transformation in *The Merchant of Venice.* The two ancient and improbable stories of the pound of flesh and the caskets were apparently combined in a lost play....In choosing this as the basis for his drama Shakespeare was adopting two procedures already

established: first, the combination of two stories in one play, and, second, the use of tragic complications in sharp contrast to the prevailing tone of light comedy. Like Greene and many other earlier writers he was making tragi-comedy, but was careful to emphasise the happy ending. After tragedy is averted, or rather ended, in the punishment of the villain, we return for the last act to the moonlight terrace at Belmont and to the merriments of the reconciled lovers.

There has been general admiration for the techical skill with which Shakespeare ties together the two stories and carries us back and forth from Venice to Belmont without deranging the coherence and rapidity of the action. The stories, however, are of a childish improbability that calls forth all his ripening powers of characterisation to make them plausible. The Elizabethans, hungry for story, gulped the impossibilities. The modern reader expects events to develop from character rather than personalities to grow out of story, and finds it difficult to accept the major premise of all romantic drama, that the impossible is most likely to happen. But the play presents Shakespeare's solution of this difficulty of romance—no matter what the persons do, he makes them as real and as interesting as possible........Shakespeare gave to stories, however improbable, and to situations, however theatrical, the added interest that comes from enriching, enlarging and humanising their actors. Even Morocco making a silly choice becomes dignified, even Bossanio the foolish becomes agreeable, Jessica stealing jewels from her father is attractive, the clown is individual, Portia disguised as a doctor of laws is magnificent, and Shylock, the deserved butt of laughter of all those delightful people, is pathetic. The old stories were not designed to carry so much meaning, but it is one of the qualities of Shakespearean comedy that it has endowed the most improbable romance with humanity."

Shakespeare maintained the advance in the art of comedy in his next three brilliant plays, *Much Ado About Nothing*, *As You Like It* and *Twelfth Night*. They complete the series of seven romantic comedies written during the decade from '*Love's Labour's Lost* (1590) *to Twelfth Night* (1601). Though the Elizabethan dramatists in general were producing other romantic comedies, yet none of them except Shakespeare's offered any new developments in the type. By 1600 under the leadership of Ben Jonson comedy was becoming more and more

realistic and satiric depiction of contemporary manners, and thus with these three masterpieces of Shakespeare the course of romantic comedy came to a halt.

Dealing with general characteristics common to these three comedies, Thorndike writes: "In each the main plot concerns two beautiful and noble ladies and their lovers, and ends with their marriage. The focus of interest is always on the idealized heroine. The vicissitudes that interfere with the course of true love are of the usual sort; in two plays they involve villainy and threaten tragedy, in the third there is the familiar complication of one heroine with the other disguised as a boy. In all the three low comedy is carried on by dolts, clowns and clever servants. The element of tragedy is never carried so far as in *The Merchant*, and the tone of refined comedy is maintained by songs, dances, and especially by witty dialogues. In only one play is there spectacle recalling that of Lyly's plays, or the *Dream*, in the pastoral and woodland scenes of *As You Like It;* but the place of action is always foreign and remote, there are picturesque figures such as sailors, priests, and watchmen, and the mood is high fantastical......Shakespeare is not inventing the entire play as *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. He is drawing material from widely different sources and is treating it in conformity with the practice of the stage and especially with profit from his own experience in preceding comedies...... His transformation, if it can be analysed at all, may be described as resulting from the dramatic skill and tact with which he blends the familiar ingredients, from the characterisation that makes every one from clown to heroine alive and individual, and from the matchless gift of expression that turns everything into wit and poetry."

The plays considered so far include all Shakespeare's comedies which he wrote before 1600 excluding the Falstaff plays. They show the development of romantic comedy in his hands. The later comedies of Shakespeare can be divided into three groups, representing different periods and following different forms and fashions of drama. In the first group of comedies are included *Measure for Measure*, *All's Well that Ends Well*, and *Troilus and Cressida*. Referring to these comedies Thorndike writes: "They do not belong to any definite type but are grouped together because they were probably written a year or two of one another and because they possess some qualities in common. All exhibit the baser side of sexual passion, all look upon life in a satirical rather than a merry humour, and all

are confused in structure, uneven in style, and constrained rather than spontaneous in manner. Two present the complication rather common in Elizabethan drama, but unpleasant to modern taste, in which a wife secretly takes the place of another woman in her husband's embraces."

A fourth play, *Pericles*, written during his period, resembles *Measure for Measure* as it presents an idealised heroine against a background of sexual inquity, in the trial of the heroine's chastity and in the brothel scene.

Commenting on these four plays Thorndike writes: "They were written during the years when Shakespeare was mainly occupied by the great series of tragedies that began with *Julius Caesar* and *Hamlet* and ended about 1608 with *Antony and Cleopatra* and *Coriolanus*. No one of the four comedies shows him nearly at his best or marks out any course that he afterwards was to follow. Though manifestly taking suggestions from current types and fashions, they do not reveal any sure inspiration."

The last group of comedies which include *Cymbeline*, the *Winter's Tale* and *The Tempest*, written during the years 1609-11, mark the close of Shakespeare's career and a return to romance. Referring to these comedies Thorndike writes: "They resemble in some ways the earliest romantic comedies, but *Cymbeline* and *The Winter's Tale* give a pronounced development to the tragic interest. In each, idealised womanhood is submitted to all sorts of tragic trials and misfortunes and the outcome is kept uncertain until the final denouement. In contrast to the tragic entanglements and court intrigue, each play takes its heroine far from court to share in simply idyllic scene. In *Cymbeline*, Imogen shares the natural life of her brothers in the cave; *The Winter's Tale* Perdita is brought up among the shepherds, and the idyll usurps the last two acts. In *The Tempest*, where the tragic entanglements have preceded the opening of the play, the idyll of Ferdinand and Isabella develops among the wonders of the enchanted island. In all three plays much effort is spent in multiplying effective situations and in postponing and heightening the happy ending. The whole of *The Tempest* may be said to be an expanded denouement."

Giving a critical estimate of these three comedies, Raleigh has observed: "In the plays of Shakespeare's closing years there is a pervading sense of quiet and happiness which seems to bear

witness to a change in the mind of their author. In these latest plays the subjects chosen are tragic in their nature, but they are shaped to a fortunate result. Imogen and Hermione are deeply wronged, like Desdemona; Prospero, like Lear, is driven from his inheritance; yet the forces of destruction do not prevail, and the end brings forgiveness and reunion. There is no reversion to the manner of the comedies; this new-found happiness is a happiness wrung from experience and, unlike the old high-spirited gaiety, it does not exult over the evil-doer. An all-embracing tolerance and kindliness inspires these last plays. The amiable rascal, for whom there was no place in the Tragedies reappears. The outlook on life is widened; and the children—Perdita and Florizel, Miranda and Ferdinand, Guiderius and Arviragus—are permitted to make amends for the faults and misfortunes of their parents. There is still tragic material in plenty, and there are some high wrought tragic scenes; but the tension is soon relaxed; in two of the plays the construction is loose and rambling; in all three there is a free rein given to humour and fantasy. It is as if Shakespeare were weary of the business of the drama and cared only to indulge in his whim. He was at the top of his profession, and was no longer forced to adapt himself to the narrower conventions of the stage. He might write what he liked, and he made full use of his hard-earned liberty.

"The sense of relief which comes with these last plays, after the prolonged and heightened anguish of the tragedies, seems to suggest the state of convalescence, when the mind wanders among happy memories, and is restored to a delight in the simplest pleasure. The scene is shifted, for escape from the old jealousies of the court, to an enchanted island, or to the mountains of Wales, or the sheep-walks of Bohemia, where life of the inhabitants is a peaceful round of daily duties and rural pieties. The very structure of the plays has the inconsequence of reverie; even *The Tempest*, while it observes the mechanical unities escape from their tyranny by an appeal to super-natural agencies, which in a single day can do the work of years. All these characteristics of matter and form point to the same conclusion, that the darkness and burden of tragic suffering gave place, in the latest works that Shakespeare wrote for the stage, to daylight and ease.

"The tragedies may be considered his greatest achievement, so that it may sound paradoxical to speak of the sudden change from Tragedy to Romance as if it betokened a recovery

from disease. Yet no man can explore the possibility of suffering, as Shakespeare did, without peril to his own soul. The instinct of self-perservation keeps most men from adventuring near to the edge of the abyss. The inevitable pains of life they will nerve themselves to endure, but they are careful not to multiply them by imagination, lest their strength should fail. For many years Shakespeare took upon himself the burden of the human race, and struggled in thought under the oppression of sorrows not his own. That he turned at last to happier scenes, and wrote Romances, is evidence, it may be said, that his grip on hard facts cf life was loosened by fatigue, and that he sought refreshment in irresponsible play. And this perhaps is true; but the marvel is that he ever won his way back into a world where play is possible......

"In his last plays, so far from relaxing the energy of his invention, he outwent himself in fertility and reach. These are the plays which are described in Jonson's eulogy:

> Each change of many-coloured life he drew,
> Exhausted worlds, and then imagined new;
> Existence saw him spurn her bounded reign,
> And panting Time toiled after him in vain.

The brave new world of his latest invention is rich in picture and memory.......Shipwreck battle, the simple funeral of Fidele, the strange adventures of Autolycus, the dances of shepherdesses on the rustic lawn, and of fairies on the yellow sand...but the boldest stroke of his mature power is seen in his creation of a new mythology. In place of the witches and good people of the popular belief, who had already played a part in his drama, he creates spirits of the earth and of the air, the freckled hagborn whelp Caliban, the beautiful and petulant Ariel, both of them subdued to the purposes of man, who is thus made master of his fate and of the world. The brain that devised *The Tempest* was not unstrung by fatigue."

(b) Shakespeare Conception of Comedy and his Achievement.

In order to understand Shakespeare's conception of comedy and assess his comic achievement we have to consider mainly the group of plays consisting of *Much Ado About Nothing Twelfth Night*, and *As You Like It*, because of all the comedies of Shakespeare it was here that he achieved his greatest triumph. In this connection Charlton has observed in his book, *Shakespearean Comedy*: "They are the consummation of a process of growth in the art of the comedy

as practised by Shakespeare. With them Shakespearean comedy realises its most perfect form, and therefore in them Shakespeare's comic idea, his vision of the reach of human happiness in this world of men and women, is richer, deeper, more sustained, and more satisfying than in any other of his plays. They embody his surest clue to the secret of man's common and abiding welfare. Being that, they are also, technically speaking, his happiest examples of characteristically Elizabethan kind of romantic comedy, the plays in which he most fully satisfies the curiously Elizabethan aesthetic demand for a drama which would gratify both the romantic and the comic instincts of its audience.

"In claiming so much for this group of plays, I do not forget that towards the end of his plays, in the benevolence of his older age, Shakespeare averted his eyes from the abyss of universal tragedy they had pierced, and, fixing them once more on the springs of human joy, he—or rather the poet in him—saw those benign idylls of human charity, the so-called romances, which we know as his *Cymbeline*, his *Winter's Tale* and his *The Tempest*. These romances have obvious affinities with Shakespeare's earlier comedies; they are comedies even more than tragi-comedies. Nor could one wish any other valediction to Shakespeare's life work than is uttered in these. But their benignity must not sentimentalise our judgment into a false appraisement of their dramatic worth. Poetically, they are of great price. As glimpses, too, of the ingrained charitableness, the temperamental gentleness, the serene and benevolent tolerance of Shakespeare the mortal, they are beyond all aesthetic price. It is easy then to value them wrongly; and Dowden having grouped the preceding tragedies under the rubric 'In the Depths', allures one to the delusive slope oy labelling these 'On the Heights'. But in no sense are they an answer nor even a substantial make-weight to the great tragedies. Shakespeare's vision of the depths of man's suffering, of the essential tragedy of his lot, remains as his deepest insight into human destiny. Yet, though the tragedies abide as Shakespeare's firmest grasp of ultimate truth, unaltered and unanswered by these last plays there is nevertheless a pleasant recompense, if but a very partial mitigation, in these romances. They are an old man's consolation for the inescapable harshness of man's portion, a compensation which pleases the more because with the coming of age, something of the terror of the things the dramatist in his strength has hitherto seen has been

blunted by the weakening in him of his power of imaginative vision. It is touching to the rest of mankind, and even to its philosophers, to find that Shakespeare having peered more deeply than any other man into the depth of human misery, can yet find some sure promise of joy in the freshness, the innocence, the simplicity of girlhood's unspolit nature. Miranda, however, and Perdita, and even Imogen are but an old man's consolation. They were a touching hope for the world rather than a certain pledge of its welfare to be. One remembers how another great dramatist, perhaps the one who alone is comparable with Shakespeare in grasp of mortal misery, Euripides, also found that when all else failed, when mankind in its power and its maturity, seemed but frustrate its own happiness and to will its own woe, there were still children, untainted by custom and experience, who at the mere prompting of native innocence would offer themselves as did Iphigenia to be saviours of their world and so give promise of a not impossible happiness for humanity. It is much that two such seers of mortal tragedy should utter their faith in the native goodness of mere human nature. But it is literally true that, as its presentation in the motive of the plays runs without complete dramatic conviction, this belief is nothing more than a faith; it is a faith, too, which seems to imply a heavy bias towards evil in the world of men. Its trust is especially in those who are apart from it rather than in those who by the extent and the variety of their living have inured themselves to human weakness and have thereby become more representative of human life.

"To this extent, even the benignity of these last plays is diminished. But the essential truth is that their view of life is less profound and less compelling than the view of it presented either in the tragedies or in the earlier and mature comedies. Though the romances are Shakespeare the man's last words on humanity and on destiny, they are not therefore his profoundest words. The finding of Prospero, true as it may be, has deluded criticism. There can scarcely be a shadow of doubt that in the romances, Shakespeare the dramatist is declining in dramatic power. The hand still retains its cunning, the stage-carpenter is still master of his craft, and the poet is still the consummate magician of words. But the dramatist is losing his initiative sense of the essential stuff of drama, of the impact of man on men and on the things which in the mass make that experience which we call life. *The Winter's Tale*, and most

of all in its Leontes plays with figures who are markedly lacking in positive identity of personality which would stamp them as recognisably and consistently human. *The Tempest* and *Cymbeline* rely too often on the depiction of a mood or on the use of a conviction as substitute for the fundamental art of characterisation. These plays have, of course, their own virtue. But there could be no clearer evidence of the weakening of Shakespeare's dramatic genius. For our own particular argument, its most manifest symptom is seen by comparing the heroines of the romances with those of the mature comedies. To set a Predita or a Miranda by the side of a Rosalind or a Viola is to put a slip of girlhood by the side of women who have grown into the world, become a part of its fabric and enriched their personality by traffic with affairs and with other men and women. For the purposes of comedy, which by its nature seeks to envisage the way to happiness in a material world, the experience of a Viola or of a Rosalind is worth infinitely more than the charming innocence and ignorance of the world which are the peculiar virtue of a Perdita and a Miranda. Let there be no mistake. Shakespeare's last plays, the romances, are rich in such pleasure as none but Shakespeare could provide. But, as comedies, they are of little account. They can and will be omitted from our survey of Shakespearean comedy. For our enquiry, the peak is reached by *Much Ado, Twelfth Night* and *As You Like it*."

The chief characteristics of Shakespearean comedy as exhibited in these three typical comedies are that they are romantic and poetic. In this connection Gordon has observed in his book, *Shakespearean Comedys*: "Comedy deals with the familiar surroundings and with society as it exists; but Shakespeare the romantic habitually does neither.....Recall that romantic world in which Shakespeare is happiest—the world of his comedies and young people—that incomparable rainbow mixture of Old England and Utopia—and you will observe that most of these plays begin with some artificial seclusion or segregation from the world. The curtain goes up; at once, or in a scene or two, the door is shut on ordinary life. Except in *The Comedy of Errors* and *The Merchant of Venice*, where the play opens on a public mart, hardly anybody goes to business in these Shakespearean latitudes, or seems to be obliged to get up at any particular time though, on the whole, except for the drinkers, all Shakespeare's people like the morning. The scene being staged for love, it is essential

that its young people should be idle, should have time on their hands. Every one of importance lives on his or her estate; or in Arcadia—where there are no clocks, and everybody helps everybody else. It is a world of delicious make-believe of Academes, Illyrias, and Forests of Arden—of seaside Bohemias or desert islands. Even when the scene is most real—when the postal address is known—it is still romantic and Utopian: for what, as we know, is Verona, what is Padua but 'some-where in Italy'? And Italy, to the Shakespearean young, was the Worldly Paradise, where a Lucentio might hopefully look for 'love in idleness'."

But however fantastic and Utopian the fiction of Shakespearean comedy may be, Life always comes in and claims its due. In this connection Charlton writes: "But though the ultimate world of Shakespeare's comedy is romantic, poetic, and imaginative, it is by no means unsubstantial and fantastic. The forest of Arden is no conventional Arcadia. Its inhabitants are not exempt from the penalty of Adam. Winter, rough weather, the season's differences, the icy fang and churlish chiding of the winter's wind invade Arden as often as they invade this hemisphere of ours. Nor does manna fall to it from heaven. One may come by sufficient sustenance of flesh, if one has weapons and the impulse to make a breach in the conventionality of idyllic Nature by killing its own creatures, the deer, to whom the forest is the assigned and native dwelling-place. Arden, too, is not ignorant of the earthly landlordism which cramps the labourer's life with harshness:

> My master is of churlish disposition
> And little recks to find the way to heaven
> By doing deeds of hospitality.

And, after all, pastoral life in Arden is merely episodic in the round of man's fuller existence, 'when I was at home, I was in a better place.' Rosalind and Orlando will return to live their adult life in the society of man and in a civilisation which will impose on them the duties of extended social responsibilities. Only by hearsay is life in Arden reputed to be a fleeting the time carlessly as they did in the golden age even young Orlando knows that it may be losing and neglecting of the creeping hours. Arden, indeed, may properly excite the twisted sentimentalism of Jaques by the Darwinian illustrations of the cruel struggle for survival.

"But Arden survives. It survives as an immeasurable enlargement of the universe of comedy. No longer is the comic

spirit confined to the city and to the market-place. And not only is there Arden. There is Illyria. There are the vast expanses of a less known world; romantic countries on whose coasts all the strange and stirring episodes that man has dreamed may come true: shipwreck, piracy, warfare, marvellous escapes from imminent death, hazards boldly and even recklessly encountered. Or, may be, land of *dolce far niente,* where music is the food of love, where corporeal and material exigencies offer no impediment to man's grasp at the opulence of a merely sentimental existence. In such a climate, a duke may wallow orientally in the luxuriance of sheer sensuous excitement; but in the same air, the witchcraft adventure will strike from a simple ship's captain a nobility of benevolence which will sacrifice all for another's good."

Shakespeare has not only extended the physical world in these comedies but also the world of spirit. In this connection Charlton has further observed: " 'This is the air, this is the glorious sun.' But it is not only in its geographical atmosphere that the world of these comedies is so vastly larger than that of classical comedy, so much more radiant than that of Shakespeare's earlier romantic comedies, and so much more rich than that of Falstaff's Eastcheap. In its own turn, the world of the spirit has been equally extended. As one obvious sign of it, man has become more exquisitely conscious of music. There had, of course, always been music in Elizabethan plays. It was hallowed by their earliest tradition. In daily life, too, an Elizabethan, whether nobleman or peasant, had found music as much an habitual part of his occupation as was eating or drinking or working.

> O fellow, come, the song we had last night.
> Mark it, Cesario, it is old and plain ;
> The spinsters and the knitters in the sun
> And the free maids that weave their thread with bones
> Dose to chant it.

It is not only that song and music irradiate these plays—the very clown of one of them has almost lost his clownage to qualify as a singer—the important point is that the men and women of the play and Shakespeare and his audience are becoming conscious of what the spell of music implies. 'That strain again': these old and antique songs were apt to arouse amorousness in Orisno and yet 'to relieve him of his passion much.' To recognise the palpable effect of music was the first step: to become aware of its implications was another.

In men's secular lives, music ministered most powerfully to their passion of love. 'If music be the food of love, play on.' And so they found themselves at the very heart of the mystery, the recognition that, however strange, sheep's guts did in fact heal their souls out of their bodies. They were feelingly aware that the soul is susceptible to strange and unaccountable impulses, and that, responding to them, it enters a rich and novel spiritual kingdom.

"What this means for the purposes of Shakespearean comedy is this. Man had discovered that he was a much less rational and a much more complex creature than he had taken himself to be. His instincts and his intuitions, his emotions and his moods were as real and as distinctive a part of him as his reason and his plain commonsense. They were, in fact, a much more incalculable yet often a much more exciting and satisfying part of his nature than was his sober intellect. Man was rediscovering the validity of his intuitions and of his emotions; he was, in particular, and for the express purposes of comedy becoming intellectually aware that the tumultuous condition of his being which followed his falling in love and urged him on to woo, was in fact no mean and mainly physical manifestation of his personality; it was, in fact, the awakening in him of the fuller capacities of his spirit."

Another characteristic of these comedies is that love is the predominant theme. In this connection, Charlton further remarks: "So, amongst the themes of Elizabethan comedy, love had now justified its primacy. It had willy nilly always been the major interest. But, as the earlier comedies have shown, its usurpation had been hazardous for the spirit of comedy. It had hitherto forced itself into a Pyrrhic triumph as an alien invader backed only by the forces of popular preference. It could rightly take its place in Elizabethan comedy as the presiding genius. It was the touchstone by which fine spirits were struck to their finest issues. It was also, of course, a test by which weaker mortals revealed their weakness, grosser ones their grossness, and foolish ones their folly. It is noteworthy, however, that though these three great comedies are even more exclusively the plays of lovers and their wooing than are the earlier ones, seldom does Shakespeare allow their wooing to express itself through the full gamut of its lyric modulations. Its utterance is adapted to a dramatic, and, indeed, to a comic scene, depth of affection is displayed rather by hints and by deeds than by the conventional phrase of the love poet

The homily of love from its gentle pulpiters is felt to be tedious, and is seldom allowed to weary its hearers. Often, indeed, when the wooing itself is an extended episode of the story, it is camouflaged in circumstances shaped by the wooers to cover the real passion. Beatrice and Benedick deliberately adopt a kind of inverted technique of love-making; and for them, the normal idiom of lovers is feigned by others so as to be overlaid by the two who are to be the victims of the device. Rosalind, disguised as Ganymede, pretends to be herself in order to teach Orlando to woo. Viola expresses her own love only by innuendo and finds a sort of outlet for her inhibition, as well as a gratification for her own sense of restraint, in unfolding to Olivia the passion of the Duke's love, as if halooing her name to the reverberate hills to make the babbling gossip of the air cry out 'Olivia'. But having done this, Viola will find it easier to be her natural self. 'I took great pains to study it, and 'ts poetical.' In the throes of her own love, she will revert to sanity......

"Rosalind, Viola, and, to a less extent Beatrice are Shakespeare's images of the best way of love. They and the men in whom they inspire love are Shakespeare's representation of the office of love to lift mankind to a richer life. So, by the entry into it of love, not only has the world of three comedies become a bigger world, the men and women who inhabit it have become finer and richer representatives of human nature. They have entered into the possession of spiritual endowments which, if hitherto suspected to exist at all, had either been distrusted as dangerous or had become moribund through desuetude. They have claimed the intuitive, the subconscious, and the emotional as instruments by which personality may bring itself into a fuller consciousness of and a completer harmony with the realities of existence........"

Generally Shakespeare's comedies start with a hypothesis and the audience are requested to admit something, and it is only then that many of the improbabilities in the plays can be reconciled. In this connection, Gordon writes: "Every play of Shakespeare begins with a request. It asks us to admit something. Suppose, says the dramatist, these people to have come together, and to be in these positions, let me show you what happens. Accept the hypothesis and everything follows. Refuse it, and the play cannot go on....Shakespeare, in his comedies, usually asks a good deal of us,......puts a strain on our credulity......he continues to ask a good deal, and a refusal on

this ground alone to have any dealings with one of his comedes must logically be extended to others. Even in so mature and so masterly a play as *Twelfth Night* we are presented, in the hypothesis with a young lady...the central figure of the play.... who puns with sailors on an unknown coast, having just been rescued from the water and as she supposed, seen her brother drowned before her eyes. Yet she puns. Nor is this all. With her clothes still dripping from her immersion she hastens to inquire who rules in these parts, ond on being told, and hearing that the prince is a bachelor, remarks, in effect, that this will do. She there and then decides to supplant the lady whom he courts.

"Now, it is no doubt true that any woman in Viola's position far from inventing, at such a moment, so ambitious a scheme of life......would have hastened to disclose herself to the nearest consul, and resume her journey. Because presumably she was *going* somewhere; and we know that she was penniless. On this way of thinking, the whole incident becomes monstrous and improbable. Viola is either inhuman or unreal. It is, however, the hypothesis of *Twelfth Night* that Viola does none of the things which an ordinary young woman would have done in her position, but forms instead, and instantly, the bold design which the play unravels. We can of course, refuse this; but do we? It is asking a good deal more of us than most modern dramatists do; but something must be allowed to Romance. All fiction rests upon belief. Romance lives by it. Belief is its whole capital; and what does it matter if now and then the account is a little overdrawn? The bank, even today, can stand it. The dramatist like Shakespeare who goes beyond life to please us is entitled to a larger share of our credulity. It is our one way of paying him; and there is no price which, I believe, we pay so easily, or with half so good a will."

Regarding the secret of the charm of Shakespeare's comedies, Gordon writes: "What, then to conclude, is the secret of Shakespeare's comedies: of their lasting beauty and power? It is no mystery. Their secret is the secret to Boccaccio's *Decameron*. As it has been said of that book, 'It is the secret of light and air.' A brilliant sunshine inundates and glorifies them. The spirit that inspires them is an absolute humanity unashamed and unafraid. You may sometimes be shocked by the language of your company; you may be shocked, but you will never be cold-shouldered. You may sometimes be incommoded by the diversity of your experience: but you are never melancholy, you are never outcast. The world, which is the

foundation of sanity, is always with you or near you. The world is made of Life and Hope and the Shakespearean Comedy is a portrait of the world. Some of our modern analysts think that Shakespeare in his comedies might have gone deeper. The direction of his comedies, as of Boccaccio's stories, is rather to width than depth but what is wrong with width? 'The world *is* wide, and its width supplies a kind of profundity in another dimension.'"

(c) The Role of Women in Shakespeare's Comedies.

Regarding the role of women in the comedies of Shakespeare, Gordon writes in his book, *Shakespearean Comedy*: "All lectures on Shakespeare's comedies tend to become lectures on Shakespeare's women, for in the comedies they have the front of the stage. Of most of Shakespeare's plays no such feminine predominance can be asserted. It is absent from his English Histories, and from most of his Tragedies also. In the world of the comedies, on the other hand, he may gratify his bent to the utmost. For it is true of most of Shakespeare's comedies, as it is of daily life, that where the woman is there also, probably, is the root and heart of the matter. Shakespeare was a great student of women and his portraits of women have never been surpassed: women of all ranks and ages—from the queen to the dairymaid—and from fifty to fifteen. The best of artists have their limits: but in this bright particular region Shakespeare would appear to have had none. From Cleopatra to Miranda—which I take to be very nearly the full span—he is equally at home, and has the whole range of feminity at his command.

"I believe that the romance, the other-worldliness, the makebelieve of the comedies, so favourable to his young heroines may have been felt by Shakespeare as an escape from some of the other plays he was then writing—his plays from English history, plays of medieval times, full of battle and murder and sudden death. You cannot read those history plays without noticing what a harsh and unfavourable soil they offer for the characteristic virtues and brighter graces of women. On that turbulent scene they have, indeed as a rule, only one choice. They must either succumb to the violence of their men; or they must meet them quite primitively with what weapons they have by nature. The chief weapon of a woman, in violent times—perhaps at all times—is her tongue; and if that fails, it appears from these plays—such is the crudity of their civilisation—that she can always scratch. Shakespeare's medieval

women frequently mention their nails, their 'ten commandments', as they call them; but though they often threaten to scratch, as a rule it would seem to have been necessary. Their tongues are quite enough. The most hardened ruffians—all but Richard III—shrink from the precision of their insults as from the stings of adders. The head of the family of viragoes is Queen Margret ('Captain Margret'), the wife of poor King Henry VI. When she appears, most of the men seem suddenly to remember that they had promised to be somewhere else. I will quote only one couplet of evidence:

> **EXETER.** Here comes the Queen......I will steal away.
> **THE KING.** Exeter, so will I.

"A formidable lady! He is her husband, mind you! The other mention their nails, and so does she, but when Queen Margret means business, she uses the knife. It was a hard world for both women and children. Here and there, some woman finds it possible to remain womanly and survive; and it is for that reason that Queen Constance lives so graciously in our minds.

"When we turn to the comedies of Shakespeare, we enter another world; a world of which the first quality is—what? With the English histories in my mind—as they were in Shakespeare's—I should say that its quality is that it is a world safe for women: a climate in which a girl can be happy and come to flower, in which the masculine element drops its voice. Certainly, whatever may have happened on the historical scene, here, in this land of Arcady, in this Utopia of Romance, Man, mere Man, lays down his arms. There is never any question who rules in these latitudes: It is Woman, Woman, all the time. I suppose no man ever grudged these glittering heroines, these Rosalinds, Violas, and Portias, their overpowering success. They so evidently deserve to win, and to put man in his place; for no more charming, witty, rebellious—and, I would remind you, level-headed—young women ever danced across a stage. Shakespeare's pen seems to move with a new grace and vivacity the moment one of them enters.

"It is amusing to compare these young women of the comedies with the young men who run after them; in other words, with their future husbands......They are in love with each other, these young people—this couple and that couple; though the young women, as is only right and proper, are mostly rather slow to admit it. But mark, I would ask you the difference in their behaviour. The young men

are fine fellows, handsome, debonair, devoted; but it hardly fails to have struck you how much better they are at talking than doing anything! When any real business has to be done, when any difficult arrangemet has to be made—who does it, who makes it? Always the women. The young men seem quite helpless, and while they are occupied in looking handsome and worthy of their parts, the women make the plans. Shakespeare is so consistent about this that I conceive he must have meant it. Turn to any comedy of Shakespeare's you like, from the first to the last; always it is the women who keep their heads, and see things through. I will take a prime example, out of many. I will take Portia, that well-known and very Shakespearean young lady, and those Venatian gentlemen who surround her in that play. What fumblers they all are compared to her! with just initiative enough to get into mischief and not initiative enough to get out of it. She treats them all like rather likable naughty children, which is very feminine of her, and what they deserve. They have their masculine pomposities, of course, and their fine public-meeting attitude, and their great idea."

Regarding the role of women in the comedies of Shakespeare and especially of the heroines, Charlton has observed: "Shakespeare's enthronement of woman as queen of comedy is no mere accident, and no mere gesture of conventional gallantry. Because they are women, these heroines have attributes of personality fitting them more certainly than men to shape the world towards happiness. His menfolk, a Hamlet or a Macbeth or an Othello, may have a subtler intellect, a more penetrating imagination, or a more irresistible passion. But what they have more largely in one kind of personal endowment, they own only at the expense of other properties no less essential to the encountering of such varied circumstances as are presented by the act of living. These heroes in effect, are out of harmony with themselves, and so are fraught with certainty of tragic doom. Their personality is a mass of mighty forces out of equipose; they lack the balance of a durable spiritual organism. It was in women that Shakespeare found this equipose, this balance which makes personality in action a sort of ordered interplay of the major qualities of human nature. In his women, hand and heart and brain are fused in a vital and practicable union, each contributing to the other, no one of them permamently pressing demands to the detriment of the other, yet each asserting itself periodically to exercise its vitality, even if the

immediate effect be a temporary disturbance of equilibrium, for not otherwise will they be potent to exercise their proper function when the whole of their owner's spiritual nature is struck into activity. Perhaps it was primarily because Shakespeare found women more sensitive to intuition and more responsive to emotion that he first promoted them to dominion in the realm of comedy. He found, moreover, in their instincts, a kind of finely developed mother-wit, a variety of humanised commonsense which, because it was impregnated with human feeling, was more apt to lay hold of the essential realities of existence than was the more rarified and isolated intellect of men. But, though it was what, to this extent, may be called their essential femininity which gave his heroines their first claims to rulership in comedy, Shakespeare insisted in his maturer comedies that all the qualities which his heroines owed to the promptings of intuition and instinct were only beneficent in human affairs when instinct and intuition were guided by a mind in which a sublimated commonsense had established itself as the habitual director of action and behaviour."

(d) Wisdom in Shakespeare's Comedies.

Charlton, in his *Shakespearean Comedy*, has analysed in detail the underlying wisdom in the comedies of Shakespeare. He believes that though these comedies are romantic in spirit, they are not divorced from reality and if read in the right manner, one can find in them a profound comprehension of life and worldly wisdom. Thus he writes: "In the last resort, the greatness of these greatest of Shakespearean comedies will be measured by the profundity and the persuasiveness of the apprehension of life which they embody, by the worth, that is, of their underlying wisdom. What then is the comic idea of which these plays are the dramatic revelation?

'In the first place it must be noted that though these romantic comedies break through the traditional scope of classical comedy, their sphere is still rigorously confined within the proper orbit of comedy. They limit themselves to acquaintance with life here and now; the world, and not eternity, is their stage. It is, of course, a world presenting many more woeful pageants than comedy is capable of transmuting to happiness; and comedy must confine itself to those threats of fate and those rubs of circumstance which can be reconciled with man's reach for assured joy of living. Is these ripest of

Shakespeare's comedies, comedy is seeking to its own artistic way to elucidate the moral art of securing happiness by translating the stubbornness of fortune into a quiet and a sweet existence.

"It finds that this art comes most easily to those who by nature are generous, guiltless, and of a free disposition, just indeed as Shakespeare's heroines are. It finds the art crippled. if not destroyed, in those who lack the genial sense of fellowship with mankind. A Malvolio, sick of self-love, thanking God that he is not for the element of his associates, sees the rest of men merely as specimens of genus 'homo'. The springs of sympathy are dried up within him. He becomes merely time-server planning only for his own selfish gain.

"The corruption of man by the coldness of his blood and the stifling of his sense of brotherhood is seen even more clearly in Oliver and in Don John: it is the source of their villainy. Don John lives only to gratify his own antipathies. Not only is he without desire to do good to others; he prefers the delight of increasing their woes...His spirit toils in nothing but in framing of villainies. Even Jaques has been corrupted into supercilious–ness by cultivating superiority and habituating himself to contemplative mockery and polite persiflage. He patronises humanity; but there is no love......His compendious summary of the seven stages of man is seen to be grossly inaccurate when its heartlessness is immediately followed by the breaking into the scene of Orlando and Adam: for there is no place for either of these in Jaques's dialogue. Charity and gratitude are beyond his comprehension......Here, indeed, is the deepest root of human evil: the most outstanding feature of the moral valuation of human worth in these comedies is its departure from almost all accredited codes of conduct in its relative lenience towards crime asd even vice in comparison with its condemnation of ingratitude.

> I hate ingratitude more in a man,
> Than lying, vainness, babbling, drunkenness,
> Or any taint of vice whose strong corruption,
> Inhabits our frail blood.

"This, indeed, is the very heart of Shakespeare's humanism. So, with all his vaunt of wisdom, Jaques is less aware of the things which really are than is the simple-minded Corin. Corin is, in fact, a profounder philosopher than is Jaques: 'hast any philosophy in thee, shepherd." 'No more but that I know the more one sickens the worse at ease he is; and that

he that wants money, means and content, is without three good friends; that the property of rain is to wet and fire to burn, that good pastures make fat sheep and that a great cause of the night is lack of the sun, that he that hath learned no wit by nature nor art may complain of good breeding or comes of a very dull kindred.....

"It is the setting up of harmonious and beneficent relationship with human beings which is emphasised in the comedies of Shakespeare...Of all virtue, that which best promotes its well-being is the passion for serving the world, the instinct of sacrifice in the cause of general good...Paper-policies of virtue, theories of right and wrong, play no part in the active goodness of Shakespeare's nobler figures. Abstract propositions formulated in mere words are a false moral coinage; their currency is not even valid in their own home country. 'Every one can master grief but he that has it.' Purely intellectual convictions do not avail their professors: men

'Can counsel and speak comfort to that grief
Which they themselves not feel; but, tasting it,
Their counsel turns to passion, which before
Would give preceptual medicine to rage,
Fetter strong madness in a silken thread,
Charm ache with air, and agony with words,
No, no; 'tis all men's office to speak patience
To those that wring under the load of sorrow;
But no man's virtue nor sufficiency
To be so moral when he shall endure
The like himself.
For there was never yet philosopher
That could endure the toothache patiently,
However they have writ the style of gods
And made a push at chance and sufferance.

For men are flesh and blood: we are all mortal; and man is a giddy thing. Yet he is much more the matter through which our happiness is to be earned than are the natural or the material objects in our environment. Hence the foundation of all lasting pleasure is the gift of intuitive sympathy, and the habit of forbearance and of tolerance. In the finest spirits, those who create more happiness than they receive, these instincts will be consecrated to the constant service of the world, where service sweats for duty, not for meed, or where the meed is but the unsought spontaneous joy of well doing.

"But Shakespeare's heroes and heroines are not sworn

crusaders for universal regeneration. They are non idealists swept along in a surge of philanthropic sentiment. They are, in the last resort, as unanswerinly conscious of the obligations of commonsense as ever hero of comedy was. But in them it is a faculty which is nourished by so much more of their personality than was Falstaff's. It still requires of them as it required him, and as it requires all comic heroes, to know exactly what the world is and what man is rather than what one might dream they ought to be. These heroines know the world as unerringly as did Falstaff. The fundamental sanity of Beatrice is that she can see a church by daylight. All of them recognise the immutable conditions of human existence: an hour after nine o'clock, it is ten o'clock, and after one hour more 'twill be eleven.

"It is surely not a dramatist's business to preach. Still less is it his office to propound a systematic body of moral doctrine. It is his primary business to see, to see the world and man and life. Then, as a poet, he projects his vision. He puts what he has seen into the shape which presents it in the precisely proportionate modulations, which display the elements of it performing what it is in life their nature to perform. His presentation fails or succeeds by the power of it to impress us with its actuality, its comprehensiveness, its truth. And it impresses not only by one faculty of our perceptual and cognitive organism. To secure artistic conviction, it must impress all at once. Shakespeare in these comedies is not in fact telling us that he thinks that charity ought to be man's way of dealing with his fellows: he is not persuading us on ethical and religious grounds that we should cultivate sympathy and nourish love. On the contrary he is exercising a purely artistic gift. He is revealing to us that, whether we like it or not, whether we ought or ought not to do it, it is clear to the eye of the seer that love is the one way to supreme happiness on this earth. He saw this as a fact by sensitiveness of his poetic apprehension. And his creative genius so translated it as the guiding principle of the world it bodied forth that we weaker mortals are permitted to see it too. And seing is believing."

(e) Conclusion.

Shakespeare's comedies do not fall in line with the common orthodox and classical view that comedy should be satiric or corrective. The nature and purpose of comedy have been explained by two outstanding writers—Meredith in his *Idea of*

Comedy and Bergson in his essay on *Laughter*. Meredith holds that Comedy appeals to the intelligence pure and simple. It is therefore critical, and its main use is to teach society what ails it. This it does by the exercise of an intelligence 'keen-edged' and 'by nature merciless.' Moliere, for example, the supreme executant in this mode, 'strips folly to the skin,' and upon vice wields a 'shrieking scourge.' Yet in all this there is no contempt or anger. 'Derisive laughter thwarts the comic idea'. The laughter of Comedy is 'impersonal, and of unrivalled politeness, nearer smile.' The victim is flayed, that is to say—but without heat quite impersonally while over all the Comic Spirit showers down those now notorious 'volleys of silvery laughter.'

Bergson in his essay on *Laughter* lays down like Meredith that Laughter as such appeals to the intelligence 'to the intelligence pure and simple.' As a rule we laugh at some person or incident out of keeping with our social mode or habit. Some element of rigidity, inelasticity or automatism in a character etc., is the common groundwork of the socially laughable, and can be illustrated through the whole gamut of the comic, from a man chasing his hat to Don Quixote. According to Bergson the purpose of the laughter is *corrective*: it asserts instructively, and without benevolence.

When we read the comedies of Shakespeare we find that both these definitions fall short of them. Meredith himself realised it when he wrote:

> Shakespeare is a well-spring of character which are saturated with the comic spirit ; with more of what we will call blood-life than is to be found anywhere out of Shakespeare ; and they are of this world, but they are of this world enlarged to our embrace by our imagination, and by great poetic imagination. They are, as it were, creatures of the woods and wilds, not in walled towns, not grouped and toned to pursue a comic exhibition of the narrower world of society. Jaques, Flastaff and his regiment, the varied troop of Clowns, Malvolio, Sir Hugh Evens and Fluellen—marvellous Welshmen!—Benedick and Beatrice, Dogberry, and the rest, are subjects of a special study in the poetically comic.

Regarding Bergson's definition and its application to the comic characters of Shakespeare, Gordon remarks: "The great tribe of the Dogberries and Verges are accounted for, yet how much in Shakespearean Comedy is recalcitrant to Bergeon's treatment! That analysis of the Comic can sacrcely be applaud-

ed which leaves Falstaff outside, or accounts for nothing but his paunch."

Thus we find that there is a clear discordance between the orthodox satiric or corrective theory of Comedy and the practice of Shakespeare. Charlton, writing about the three top-comedies of Shakespeare, has observed: "To see these plays as a form of comedy it is perhaps easiest to begin by realising that in kind they are essentially and obviously different from traditional classical comedy. Their main characters arouse admiration; they excite neither scorn nor contempt. They inspire us to be happy with them; they do not merely cajole us into laughing at them. Therein lies the fundamental difference between classical and Shakespearean comedy. Classical comedy is conservative. It implies a world which has reached stability sufficient for itself. Its members are assumed to be fully aware of the habits and the morals which preserve an already attained state of general well-being. The main interest is the exposure of offenders against common practice and against unquestioned propriety in the established fitness of things. Hence, its manner is satire, and its standpoint is public commonsense. But Shakespearean comedy is a more venturesome and more imaginative undertaking. It does not assume that the conditions of the requisites of man's welfare have been certainly established, and are therefore a sanctity only to be safeguarded. It speculates imaginatively on modes, not of preserving a good already reached, but of enlarging and extending the possibilities of this and other kinds of goods. Its heroes (or heroines, to give them the dues of their sex) are voyagers in pursuit of a happiness not yet attained, a brave new world wherein man's life may be fuller, his sensations more exquisite and his joys more widespread, more lasting, and so more humane. But as the discoverer reaches this higher bliss, he (or rather she) is making his conquests in these realms of the spirit accessible not only to himself but to all others in whom he has inspired the same way of apprehending existence. He has not merely preserved the good which was; he has refined, varied, and widely extended it. Hence Shakespearean comedy is not finally satiric; it is poetic. It is not conservative; it is creative. The way of it is that of imagination rather than that of pure reason. It is an artist's vision, not a critic's exposition."

Giving a general estimate of Shakespeare's comedies Thorndike has observed in his book, *English Comedy*: "In

his relation to contemporary dramatists, so far as types of comedy are concerned, Shakespeare has appeared as an adapter rather than as an innovator or inventor. He sometimes followed closely a current model, and then, usually after experimentation, succeeded in transforming them. He wrote romantic comedy, historical comedy, and romantic tragicomedy. In other cases, as *The Comedy of Errors*, an example of Plautian imitation, and *Merry Wives*, an example of the domestic comedy of intrigue, he was content to give the form but a single trial. But there were numerous other types having many Elizabethan representatives that did not arouse his interest. No play of his can in any strictness be termed a comedy of manners. No play has for its purpose satire. He adapted none of the various aims of realistic comedy. There are none of the various aims which give, as do Middleton's, a vivid reproduction of contemporary 'humours' or personal characteristics as are Jonson's; and none that range from individuals to social conditions and problems. Though in each play he is drawing from his observation of real life and depicting manners and men as he knew them, he never seeks primarily a presentation or a criticism of the life of his time. He is neither a realist nor a propagandist. No play definitely offers a thesis or a theory or an analysis or a sermon.

'Shakespeare's comedies are stories, drawn from romance or history, laid in past times or foreign places. No effort is spared to make those stories entertaining and amusing on the stage, but little heed is given to dress them in a consistency and probability that will bear a close comparison with actuality. The hundreds of persons so lifelike and human, and the thousands of speeches with their accent of reality, are all framed in events and places that quite remove them from any direct connection with the audience's experience. Occasionally, as in *Merry Wives* and *Measure for Measure*, the past time or the foreign scene is a rather thin disguise, but in general each play announces frankly and honestly,—this is history or legend or romance, you are not at home, you are in story-land During Shakespeare's earlier years, such practice was in accord with the common habit of translating stories of all sorts into dramatic form with no desire for verisimilitude. But later, during the period when theory and practice were uniting to require that comedy should employ 'deeds and language such as men do use' and should aim 'to show an image of the times', his muse flew still farther away from London and reality in

such plays as *Troilus*, *Pericles* and *The Winter's Tale*. For him comedy did not attach itself to a thesis but to an adventure. The main thing was to set the fancy free, and then let reality catch up if it could.

"History, romance and fantasy gave Shakespeare the fullest opportunity to be lifelike and humorous. He could be as lifelike as he pleased without any strict consort with fact and morality. Humour is a wayward fellow who flourishes on improbability. Confined to the land of reality he can do excellent work in the service of ridicule or derision or satire, but he is a little subdued in these beaten paths. Let him free in the land just removed from reality and he can roam where he will. If he finds the court too didactic he goes to the tavern; if adventures become wearisome he rests with the yokels; if the stupid fails him he visits the wise. The love stories in Shakespeare's comedies are monotonous, but the heroines are not, chiefly because humour comes to their aid. All this is merely not to say that romance and history afford opportunities for comic relief, so does a thesis or a criticism; but in Shakespeare's story-land the occupations for humour are without limit. He makes puns and sings songs, he ridicules and he sympathises, he is the butt and the jester, he plays pranks and exercises the intellect, he exposes folly and adorns wisdom. He can see the world just as it is or he can see it topsy-turvy; he can get back to reality in a moment and in another he can be far away from it. He can look upon humans as Puck or a Falstaff or a Caliban. He invites us to laugh at ourselves, or at our neighbours, or to laugh in the sheer joy that we have escaped from reality.

"There is somewhat comparable effect in the tragedies They exalt human aspiration and achievement and defeat. They reveal life, but in a magnifying mirror. And so Shakespeare's comedies play over a vaster and more significant range of deed and emotion than any mere analysis of reality could muster. Falstaff transcends fact as truly as does Ariel. Beatrice is as much a creation of fancy as is Titania. We pass from Eastcheap to Fairlyand, or from the archness of Rosalind to the howling of Caliban. It is a great play-world that reflects back to us the sentiment, fund, nonsense, mirth and irony of our real world, but all blended and interwoven like the motives of a musical rhapsody. We recognise this and that familiar strain, but it never before has such melodic companionship".

10. SHAKESPEARE'S TRAGEDIES.

(a) Shakespeare's Development as the Writer of Tragedies.

Shakespeare as a writer of tragedies started his career as an apprentice of Marlowe and Thomas Kyd. Referring to his earlier tragedies, Thorndike remarks: "The young actor and poet learned to meet successfully the demands of the stage through an apprenticeship of hackwork, collaboration, and revision and progressed in his art by means of adaptation and imitation. He wrote in association and rivalry with his fellow playwrights, responding like them to theatrical fashions, and feeling like them the spur of current impulses. He shared both the limitation and the incentives, bowed to the commanding influences, and rose to the opportunities for initiative which characterise this period. His dramatic career probably began two or three years later than Marlowe's. *Titus Andronicus* and the three parts of *Henry VI* belong to the early nineties and should be classed with the tragedies of blood and the chronicle histories of those years. *King John*, *King Richard III*, and *Richard II*, came somewhat later and form a part of the more advanced development of chronicle history variously represented by *Edward III*, *Woodstock*, and Marlowe's *Edward II*. *Romeo and Juliet*, in its final form perhaps still later, is a great and original masterpiece, but still very characteristic of the dramatic period of which it is the crown and flower.'

Titus Andronicus is mainly an imitation of Kyd's *The Spanish Tragedy*. Here the revenge of a father for his son is opposed by villainous intrigue and leads the hero into madness. The play lacks the finer conception of a tragic hero who hesitates in the face of fearful responsibility. Like the current revenge plays this play is full of mutilation, murder and horror. The three parts of *Henry VI*, though in the form of chronicle plays, invade the field of tragedy. The last two parts present a series of the "falls of princes." On account of their themes of bloodshed and battle, Shakespeare seems to be working under the influence of Marlowe's historical tragedy. In *King John* also Shakespeare did not make any advance towards tragedy, though he shows some improvement in characterisation and style. In *Richard III* and *Richard II*, he is still an imitator and adaptor though he shows independent efforts to give unity to the material of English chronicle. *Richard III*, which of all these earlier tragedies can still be successfully acted on the stage,

shows a great indebtedness to Marlowe, and is so evidently imitative of the current models. In this connection Thorndike remarks, "In dramatising the chronicle he manifestly followed Marlowe, making the protagonist the dominating force everywhere in the action, and the other persons foil to set off the hero's villainy. But he adopted only with skilful and essential modifications the prevailing methods of the tragedies of blood and revenge. He personified Nemesis in Margret, and gave her various functions of a supervising ghost and of a chorus—curses, laments, and exultations. Moreover, with a tact unique at that time and not displayed in *Titus Andronicus*, he perceived that the presentation of many murders on the stage would detract from rather than add to the terror and horror centred in Richard, and so removed all the murders from view excepting that of Clarence. To compensate in a way for this lack of stage sensation, he developed Richard's dream of ghost into the highly spectacular presentation of the spirits of the eleven victims in their nocturnal appearance between the two opposing camps.... But the great dramatic merit of the play lies in the use of contrast, surprise, and particularly of dramatic irony in the separate scenes and in their masterly integration to display the character of Richard himself. Following closely the character outlined in the chronicle, borrowing conception and treatment from Marlowe's protagonists, and mindful of the host of stage villains that had proved so popular in tragedy, Shakespeare constructed a cacodemon who remains not only a great stage figure but also alive and human in our imaginations....Richard is sometimes a human being, sometimes a monster, and a stage villain. But the very fact that critics have delighted to analyse and moralise over his traits is proof that Shakespeare, in spite of the monstrosities of his conception, gave to its dramatic presentation not only a stage effectiveness but also a plausibility".

Shakespeare wrote *Richard II* also under influence of Marlowe but now in direct imitation and rivalry of *Edward II*. Following Marlowe's example Shakespeare here shows the tragedy of the reversal of fortune of a king who, on account of his temperament, becomes contemptible in prosperity and pitiable in adversity. Along with the story of the conflict between the king and the barons there is the story of 'the reluctant pangs of abdicating royalty' which lend a new pathos to the favourite theme of medieval tragedy—the defeat of a prince by scornful Fortune. Though here is no advance on Marlowe's *Edward II*, in exposition, integration, or catastrophe, yet, in

characterisation and style there is an obvious improvement. As pointed out by Thorndike, "Not only the king himself but many other persons in the play, and notably Bolingbroke, are presented with consistency and subtlety. The historical narrative is transformed into a gallery of full length historical portraits that lead us to forget history and drama in the study of their personalities. The euphuistic and sentimental Richard gives a fair field for the stylist, but his example is infectious, and the Queen, Gaunt, York, and Bolingbroke, the gardener, and in fact all the persons of the drama employ word-play, periphrasis, and in various flourishes of Elizabethan rhetorical style."

Regarding the progress made by Shakespeare in his tragic art up to. *Richard II* Thorndike has observed: "In the three chronicle histories just considered, although the historical material largely determines structure, tragic conception, and characterisation, and although, all these are obviously under Marlowe's influence yet Shakespeare had reached a stage far more advanced than that of mere imitator or adaptor. In *Richard III*, he had added his own impress to the Marlowean type of tragedy, and in *Richard II*, he introduced innovations foreshadowing his later conceptions. As a playwright he had equated many of his contemporaries in immediate popularity and outdone them in permanent historical effectiveness. He had acquired a complete mastery over the conditions and conventions of the stage, and had frequently, if not always, outdone his rivals in dramatic ingenuity and power. Like his contemporaries, however, he was hampered by theatrical conditions and intractable historical material; and his chief interest was in the opportunities furnished by the chronicles for the delineation of character and the exercise of his gifts of tongues. In range and verisimilitude his characters already far surpassed Marlowe's and as a poet, either in lyric, descriptive or purely dramatic passages, whether in sustained treatment of situation or in splendid purple patches, he had shown himself the peer of his master."

It was in his next play, *Romeo and Juliet*, that Shakespeare came to his own as a writer of tragedies. In this connection Thorndike remarks: "In *Romeo and Juliet* the same dramatic and poetic qualities are exhibited as in the historical plays, but the happy choice of the already well-known love story led Shakespeare outside of the direct range of Marlowe's example, freed him from the limits of the historical material,

and gave his genius full scope...Shakespeare's dramatic skill is manifest in his departure from the current methods of the tragedy of blood as well as in his treatment of the narrative. Some traces of the prevailing fashion do survive, as in the murder of Paris and in the attention paid to the horrors of the tomb. But many of the best scenes are of the sort that occur in the romantic comedy,—the repartee of gallants, the preparations for a feast, the dance, the street affray, the meetings and partings of the lovers,—and there is no villain no figure of Nemesis, no ghost, no warring armies, no pomp of courts. No tragedy had yet appeared with less theatrical sensationalism, and none which maintained the interest of the spectators upon the story with comparable dramatic intensity.....Characterisation, which had been increasing in range and individualism in the historical play is here triumphant. Mercutio is the first of those imaginative achievements that concentrate into a few lines of blank verse the complete individualisation of a human being; Juliet is perhaps the first of the amazing series of idealised women....The idealisation of woman was, to be sure, common in Renaissance art; and the union in her of wit and beauty, power and charm, passion and purity, innocence and wisdom, was not solely. Shakespeare's conception; but the power to conceive such a being with truth and to realise her dramatically, alive, human, and consistent, was his alone. It is in part the poetic style which distinguishes the play from the later tragedies, but the difference is everywhere manifest to our impressions. The evil and gloom and pessimism that help to make up the tragic fact in *Lear* and *Macbeth* are scarcely felt. To joy comes sorrow, because of evil and through accident,—this is the tragic theme. In the course of its presentation one may find it suggestive of the passing of youth to age or of passionate love to oblivion, but surely no one comes from the poem with a dominant impression of the wickedness of family feuds, or of the inevitable brevity of romantic passion, or of the dangers of youthful precipitousness,—rather the mind glows with the beauty and joy revealed in life.....And so the tragedy of lovers for Shakespeare had become the spur and the means to an idealisation of life. It is not in the reconciliation of the families, still less in the sense of a deserved punishment, that we find an antidote for death and evil; but in the assurance that human passion may be so lovely, human nature so full of strength and beauty. "The sun for sorrow will not show his head,' says Prince Escalus at the end, but we believe with Romeo that

Jocund day
Stands uptoe on the mistry mountain tops.

"After *Romeo and Juliet* Shakespeare returned to tragedy after a lapse of six years. The demands of the theatres and the artistic impulses had changed and were not those of Marlowe's day. When in 1600-1601 he was writing both *Julius Caesar* and *Hamlet*, the man of the hour in tragedy was Marston. In *Julius Caesar* Shakespeare dealt with the favourite theme of the story of the overthrow of a tyrant, the progress of a conspiracy, the fall of a prince and his revenge upon the murderers. But from the very beginning Shakespeare seems to be interested not so much in the story of conspiracy or revenge, but in the delineation of the character of Brutus. In the struggle of a noble and highly gifted man with a task for which he was temperamentally unfitted by the kernel of the tragedy.

"In *Hamlet* Shakespeare dealt with the character of hesitating avenger. In this play he shows a considerable influence of his contemporaries. In this connection, Thorndike writes: "The plot, situations, types of character, and leading motives of the old 'Hamlet' were already familiar to the stage in several plays. Revenge directed by a ghost, hesitation on the part of the hero, insanity real or feigned, intrigue, copious bloodshed, a secondary revenge plot, meditative philosophising in the form of soliloquies, were all essential elements probably of the Kydian 'Hamlet' but certainly of several other revenge plays. The refusal of an opportunity to kill the villain, the songs and wild talk of a mad woman, the murder of an innocent intruder, scenes in a churchyard, the appearance of the ghost to soldiers of the watch, the play within the play,—all these as well as many more minor conventionalities, such as the swearing on the sword hilt, or the voice of the ghost in the cellar, had appeared in other plays than the old 'Hamlet'. And Hamlet himself, wild and ranting at times, crafty and dissimulating at others, cynical and ironical, given to melancholy and meditation, hesitating in bewilderment, harassed by the unavoidable 'whips and scorns of time,'—so far as we can analyze the tragic hero, his characteristics had been already used by contemporary dramatists. Dramatic ingenuity was all that was required to make a new play out of this abundance of old material...... He by so means neglected the external story or denied the theatrical demand for sensation. He, perhaps, did not radically change the course of events as depicted in the old play, but

he unquestionably improved on any preceding tragedy in the mere effectiveness of the scenic presentation of a sensational story.......The scenic presentation, while telling a sensational story with a pre-eminent effectiveness, becomes as never before in English drama the means for exhibiting the inner struggle of the protagonist.....The reflections and moralising and broodings over misfortunes inherited from Seneca, and long an essential element of the revenge plays, are also, like the sensational incidents, integrated and humanised by the conception of the hero's character.....The union of a drama of blood-vengeance with a drama or thought, a union that had often been attempted by others, is finally achieved, because here for the first time there is full recognition of the tragic interest, movement, and significance of a man's battle with himself. The tragic drama of character has been consummated.

"In conception of the tragic hero we find many characteristics and some incongruities that belong to the old avengers; but there is new penetration into the sources of human motive that results in essentially new functions and scope of the tragic drama. As in most tragedies since *Tamburlaine*, the play is a one-part play, presenting a hero far above the average in mental and moral power, but for the time mainly under the sway of one dominating mood or emotion. Like the other heroes of revenge tragedies, Hamlet is a strong man brought face to face with evil. Again, like the heroes of Seneca and of most tragedies dealing with a reversal of fortune, Hamlet is a strong man brought to face the enmity of chance. He is an individual forced to struggle against a hostile environment. Again, he is a man in tragic crisis that requires the exercise of all possible powers on his part if he is to avoid disaster, who finds himself afflicted with a temperamental weakness that makes failure possible or indeed inevitable. Critics emphasise now one and now another element of his character as they emphasise one or another of these conflicts as the most important. Shakespeare, here, as in later plays, united in one hero all the varieties of conflict catalogued by the critics. But if we ask which is the most peculiarly Shakespearean, it must be said to be the conflict with his own temperamental unfitness, call that irresolution, melancholy, meditativeness, or what you will. Here lies Shakespeare's main differentiation from preceding tragedy, though one distinctly presaged in *Julius Caesar*. At all events, we have a conception of tragedy carried out in his succeeding plays. The hero, noble and righteous, is brought

into conflict with the results of evil and circumstance, and he is crippled by his own inability or weakness. Tragedy becomes, inherent in character, in the completeness that marks the best and mightiest of mankind.

"*Hamlet* is the first of Shakespeare's plays to afford a full definition of tragedy, a conception of prime importance both in the development of Shakespeare's art and in the future history of drama. A sensational struggle presented, and the abounding incidents are wrought into effective, if loosely connected stage-scenes, dealing with material similar to that then current in the theatres—villains, ghosts, murders, insanity, grim farce meditations, aphorisms. But the scenic presentation and the dramatic structure are to express not only an external struggle of the hero himself. They are to be the effect and results, nay, the very mirror of the inner thought and feeling. And the disaster that falls upon the hero and those by him beloved comes home to us as due not merely to external forces or circumstances or to evil working within, but also to an inherent unfitness of his own."

Regarding further development of tragic art exhibited by Shakespeare in his next tragedy, *Othello,* Thorndike remarks: "This conception of tragedy found further exemplification in *Othello,* freer from Elizabethan methods than any of the other tragedies. The ingredients of the story were not unfamiliar in tragedy, but Shakespeare enlarged and interpreted them to fit the conception of his two preceding tragedies in the presentation of a spiritual struggle in which goodness is attacked by evil at its point of vulnerability.....It is neither a chronicle history nor a Senescan tragedy. There is no presentation of history and little of court ceremonies. There are no battles, no long expositions, no spectacles, no ghosts, no insanity, and almost no comedy. It has few persons and virtually a single action. The underplot is subordinated and closely united to the main action and there are no delays and new excitements between crisis and catastrophe as in *Hamlet and Lear.* Nowhere else in Shakespeare is the progress of character, emotion, and deed towards the final event so consecutive and so uninterrupted. This advance in coherence and proportion seems due less to the contributing causes than to the explanation of action by character.....In consequence of this integration of character and action, the characters are, more than in the other tragedies, distinct and unmistakable......Nowhere, even in Shakespeare, are generosity and greatness of soul more

admirable than in Othello, nowhere is villainy more human than in Iago. The stage hero receives his apotheosis as the avenging hero did in *Hamlet*.......This soliloquising devil becomes identified with the suggestions and sinuosities of evil that partake of the flux of our consciousness. Hypocrisy, cynicism, cruelty, the absence of human sympathies, the pride and malignity of intellectual superiority have henceforth their symbol in Iago. Impossible, diabolical, inhuman as Barabas or Richard III, he is never for a moment unplausible, because he ever unearths a corresponding potentiality in us.

"The persons of the play, while unusually effective on the stage, and while human and real in their discourse, have a universality of appeal essential in the greatest works of art, desired by Aristotle and dimly foreshadowed in Elizabethan efforts after greatness and typicality. Othello, Desdemona, and Iago create fresh reflection and new impulse in every reader of every generation. And to each they are not only real persons but also symbols and ideals of the generosity, sweetness, and iniquity of the universe. This idealisation of character is accomplished with wonderful clarity by means of an expression, splendidly eloquent, equally masterful in prose and verse, magnificently adapted to the representation of every mood or temperament. Shakespeare here realised the ideal toward which English tragedy under the leadership of Marlowe had been struggling, the presentation of human greatness in blank verse beautiful and dramatic."

Regarding the development exhibited in *King Lear*, Thorndike writes: "If *Othello* is comparatively free from currnet conventions, *Lear* is in many respects the most Elizabethan of Shakespeare's tragedies. Story, themes, situations, stage effects constantly recall the plays of his predecessors; and if his creative imagination here attains the most outstanding triumph in all literature, it cannot be said to free itself from a confusion of archaism and absurdities.....Here he was only slightly concerned with the presentation of history and hurried over the battles and the shows, the still indispensable accompaniment of historical plays. He concerned solely with the tragic entanglements of character, with the devastations of evil and folly.....Though he chose to involve himself in manifold difficulties of story and structure, he hardly felt his fetters. No play depends less on mere incident and event. The inconsistencies and confusion of the action are forgotten in the wild turmoil of human passions. Wild, terrible, elementary, brutal,

grotesque, or sublime,—everything in the play is touched with the imaginative truth that gives it limitless range of suggestion, applicable to any discord of parents and children or to the most dreadful spiritual torture. Insanity, long a favourite theme of Elizabethan tragedy, and fantastic grotesqueness, often its bane, summons his imagination to its most wonderful creation when the feigning Bedlam counters the mad king mid the jests of the fool and the havoc of the storm.

"Madness is only one element that contributes to the overwhelming effect of the play. English tragedy had from the beginning concerned itself mainly with heinous crime and sin; and during the years immediately preceding and following *Lear* there was a distinct conception of tragedy as the representation not only of the depths or iniquity but of the moral confusion and blackness that beset us all. In *Hamlet* and *Othello* the sense of evil is ever present. In *Lear* it grips the reader like the rack. As in *Othello*, evil, here represented by the two fiendish daughters as well as by an intriguing villain, dominates the action and carries all that is good along with it to destruction. But evil is only one of the forces that cause suffering and ruin. Lear and Cordelia contend against their own imperfections and against chance and circumstances so hostile that they seem directed by gods who sport with men as with flies and loose the fury of the elements to torment their victims. Where else in tragedy are the forces that make for ruin so appalling and so irresistible; and where else are suffering and ruin so dreadful and so complete? The sufferers are powerless. Suffering does not here arouse a Prometheus's defiance, but it discovers and purifies human virtue. If evil is dominant over the action, Cordelia, Kent, the Fool and the chastened and purified Lear are dominant in our reflections. The end is not the fall and cessation of all that is good. Even in our dismay at the convulsions which evil may cause, there remain the memory of the perfection of human devotion and love. The final impression must, however, partake of confusion and horror at the blackness and ruthlessness of a moral order that can sacrifice perfect virtue in an efford to free itself from the hideous enormity of evil. This is the tragedy of life as Shakespeare saw it and the cry of bewilderment and agony seems to come from the poet's own heart. The language, sometimes crowded and difficult, has already a trace of artifice. Rarely as perfectly mastered as in *Hamlet* and *Othello*, it surpasses those plays in the tremendous sincerity of its passion. If passionate despair at things human has a language, it is the speech of Lear."

Regarding the next tragedy, *Macbeth,* Thorndike has remarked: "*Macbeth* offers a contrast to *Lear* in its brevity and rapidity. In none of the tragedies is the story told with more breathless directness, or with more effective presentation of the externals of the action.......The story is one of crime and retribution with a rather striking likeness to some of the classical dramas. It coincides with the Senecan plan of crime committed and then revenged through the accompaniment of supernatural agencies. It is the story, familiar to both humanistic and popular tragedy of a usurper who becomes a bloody tyrant and is overthrown after a reign of increasing crime. Again, as in most English tragedies the story presents the punishment of evil rather than suffering of the good, and except for the absence of lust as a motive, might have found favour with the contemporary dramatists. All these possibilities in the story were seized by Shakespeare and adapted to his purpose.

Shakespeare's use of these various potentialities of the story and the definiteness of his unifying purpose may both be seen by a comparison with his treatment of the very similar materials furnished by the chronicles for *Richard III.* There, following closely the Marlowean methods, he for some reason minimised the motive of remorse emphasised in his sources, and left Richard as conscienceless as Tamburlaine or Barabas. In Macbeth the story of ambition is also a story of the temptation, defeat, and remorse of conscience. As in the other great tragedies, Shakespeare informed the old material with the struggle of the human will. At the same time he made the most of the hints in the chronicle that the protagonist was driven by fate or some forces beyond his control. He united with marvellous dramatic fact the destiny tragedy of the Greeks and the villain tragedy of the Elizabethans. As a result the character of Macbeth has its paradoxes that are the despair of the analysts. We do not quite know how far free-will and how far superhuman agencies give his villainy a mystery and impressiveness, they never confuse for a moment the distinctions of good and evil. The powers of right and wrong are clearly marshalled, and the triumph of evil leads to anguish as well as to ruin.....For the first time since Shakespeare's early plays, there is no idealised woman. The wickedness of Iago and the wolfish sisters were relieved by the lovableness of Desdemona and Cordelia, unavailing for the time but unforgettable in the sympathies of the reader. The eternal stars never glimmer through the blackness that broods over Macbeth.

Because of this concentration one process of evil and the absence of any idealisation of goodness, the play has a less intense appeal to our sympathies than the three preceding tragedies. Again, because of its concern with historical and political results, it removes itself from immediate relationship to the common experience. In these respects it links with the two Roman historical tragedies that followed it."

Regarding *Antony and Cleopatra, Coriolanus, and Timon* and last tragedies of Shakespeare. Thorndike writes: "In *Antony and Cleopatra,* the subject of many Renaissance tragedies, Shakespeare chose for a theme an ignoble infatuation that leads counter to duty and on to destruction. The tragic course of the conflict between infatuation and ambition is encumbered by historical details and stage spectacles, but, in style and characterisation few plays, more greatly reveal Shakespeare's genius. In no play is the idealisation of character more magnificent; no other dramatist has made Antony in the lures of a strumpet still representative of what is illustrious and magnanimous in mankind, no other has made a woman with the manners and heart of a strumpet the rightful empress of the imagination......... *In Coriolanus* is involved not only historical circumstances, but also the eternal conflict between the upper and the lower classes, the incurable disease of the body politic.......Contempt of the mob was a common sentiment in Renaissance literature and the people as a factor in history held little place in the thoughts of the sixteenth century or in the historical drama. But here and in *Julius Caesar* Shakespeare treats them with far less consideration than does Fletcher or Messinger, with a contempt, indeed, than can hardly have flattered his audiences and that has often been taken as indicative of strong personal feeling.....The loss of power discernible in *Coriolanus* is conspicuous in *Timon.*

"With these themes Shakespeare's interest in tragedy exhausted itself. Possibly influenced by the success of Beaumont and Fletcher's early romantic plays he attempted in *Cymbeline* and perfected in *The Tempest* and *The Winter's Tale,* a type of play combining tragic and idyllic elements, full of romantic variety of incidents, and resulting in surprising and happy denouements. The possibilities of tragedy are there; jealousy, villainy and intrigue abound; even death is introduced. But the main actions are not of suffering and ruin, love and forgiveness heals all ills; and the end is reconciliation

and marriage. These romantic tragicomedies are departures from the established tragic forms."

(b) Shakespeare's Conception of Tragedy.

Shakespeare was the chief creator as well as the glory of English tragedy. Though he wrote a number of tragedies, yet in order to understand his conception of tragedy we have to take into account his four great tragedies—*Hamlet*, *Othello*, *King Lear* and *Macbeth*. As pointed out by Thorndike, 'The early tragedies are manifestly the products of an experimental period and the precursors of the later plays; and the three Roman histories have a subordinate and contributory rather than as essential and pre-eminent part in his achievement in tragedy. Whatever can be said of the four great tragedies applies in its essential to all."

Referring to the main points concerning Shakespeare's conception of tragedy, Nicoll writes in his book *Studies in Shakespeare*: "The first main point to note concerning Shakespeare's conception of tragedy is the fact that he strove to display themes essentially stirring and often melodramatic, and that his primal thought was dramatic effectiveness. Obviously, however, this is only the outward framework; beyond and within the external sensationalism Shakespeare has placed a more subtle, a more poetical, and less tangible tragic spirit. The two aspects must at one and the same time be kept distinct and treated together. They run parallel with one another coalescing often, yet distinct in their offices. They resemble the two rhythms in the dramatist's own blank verse.

"The varied manifestations of this inner spirit are largely responsible for the impression that each play is a symphony on some definite abstract theme. We may thus call *Othello* a drama of deception and of self-deception, *Macbeth* a drama of ambition, *Lear* a drama of headstrong passion and false pride, *Hamlet* a drama of indecision.......That this abstract idea operated on Shakespeare's mind when he was creating those plays I do not personally doubt for a moment, although he was too great an artist to allow an abstract idea such as this to dominate his work. In general it might be said that in Shakespeare's mind such an idea seems to have been necessary in order to give that unity of tone visible in every great tragedy. In this he was but ranging himself alongside those tragic dramatists of Greece and of other lands whose masterpieces, too, present the concrete expression of some ideal or of some human passion and failing.

"With this abstract atmosphere—or, more correctly, with this impression conveyed to us that the whole play is but the visualisation or realisation of an intangible essence—moves the inner conflict of Shakespeare's dramas. This inner conflict exists alongside outer conflict but rarely coincides with that. In *Hamlet* the outer conflict takes the from of Hamlet's relations to his uncle, to Polonius, and to Laertes; the inner struggle is to be discovered within Hamlet's own mind as a conflict between his desire for revenge, perhaps, his love, passion, and his ambition, and the moral scruples or 'religion' which withholds him from moving to his set purpose. *Othello* presents an outer struggle in the persons of Othello, Iago, Cassio, and Desdemona; but the inner conflict is to be sought for in the mind of Othello, and, as I believe, in the mind of Iago. So in *Lear* there are two quite clearly marked groups of characters, ranging themselves respectively under the banners of Right and Wrong, or of Good and Evil, and the clash of these two groups introduces a thrilling outer conflict ; but the inner struggle, again is to be discovered in the mind of Lear alone. *Macbeth* presents outer conflicts in relation between Macbeth and Lady Macbeth and between the former and Macduff ; but once more it is the struggle between ambition and conscience in the hero's mind which provides the inner and higher tragedy. The blunt statement as to the nature of these several forms of conflict falls, of course, very far from the truth the mental or emotional contending forces are much more subtly delineated and interposed than such a brief summary would indicate; but the fact remains that such a conflict within the mind of the hero would seem to have been for Shakespeare one of the prime essentials in his conception of tragedy.

"This inner conflict he seems normally to have confined to one figure in each drama. Even in *Othello* and in *Macbeth*, where the struggle is found in other than the central figure, there is an exception made in favour of the hero. In the former play, although there is some sort of conflict in Iago's mind, Iago is presented as too fully developed along his own particular lines to display anything of the passionate struggle visible in Othello's soul, while in the latter there is a fundamental difference between the forms of conflict revealed by Macbeth and his wife. With Macbeth the struggle is a simple one. He aims at the crown, but his conscience reproves him. Lady Macbeth, at the opening scene of the play, is single

minded; no conscience enters in to stay her mind. It is only after the climax in the murder of Duncan that her force of will begins to fail and her more sensitive being rises to control her nature. This phenomenon may serve to illustrate Shakespeare's endeavour to secure in his tragedies unity of tone and of effect. In comedy there may be mingling of many moods, dull artisans meeting with Theban aristocrats; but in tragedy the emotional effect must be single and untouched by any outer influence. Whether Shakespeare felt consciously or not, plainly the artist soul in him sank from dissipating the emotional effect of his plays by providing, as Jonson only too often did, rival spheres of interest. To have shown Laertes or Horatio as anything but non-emotioned would have been, in effect, to destroy *Hamlet*.

"As a further means towards securing this unity of effect, Shakespeare has not only subjugated his minor figures in the presence of one who gives his name to the particular tragedy, he has, as well, rendered the feminine portion subordinate to the masculine. If we sum up the women characters of his four tragedies we find them largely unimportant in comparison with those who fill the romantic comedies of his earlier or later years. The Queen in *Hamlet*, is little more than a puppet and Ophelia, for all her pathetic appeal, a shadow; Emilia is a useful servant and confidante, Desdemona a fitting foil for Othello and tool in the hands of Iago; Regan and Goneril are undistinguished monsters, and Cordelia a figure, boldly sketched in, it is true, but of minor importance when compared with Lear; Lady Macbeth occupies a central position, but her qualities, at least when we see her first and when she plays her part in driving forward the action of the tragedy, are largely masculine. There have been many attempts to vindicate these women of Shakespeare's tragedies; countless critics have spoken of innocence and trust and chastity, have dragged in violets and roses and lilies to form pleasing smiles; but all such theorising and all analysis of their character seem to be useless, in that Shakespeare, evidently in full consciousness, was driving them from the principal positions in his plays and deliberately limning their psychologies in the boldest or in the faintest of outlines. Desdemona and Cordelia certainly, by their natures, by their inherent weakness, aid in precipitating the tragic climax in their respective dramas, but their parts are insignificant when compared with those of others. It is only because Shakespeare's minor characters are so much finer than

even the chief characters of contemporary playwrights that cities have found space for analysing the temperaments of these women figures losing thereby, it would seem, that true relativity of prospect which is essential if we are to judge his work aright".

In each of Shakespeare's tragedies the story is dominated by one person—the tragic hero. Explaining this peculiarity of Shakespearean tragedy, Bradley has observed in his book, *Shakespearean Tragedy*: "Shakespearean tragedy is preeminently the story of one person, 'the hero' or at the most two, the 'hero' and 'heroine'. It is only in the love-tragedies, *Romeo and Juliet* and *Antony and Cleopatra*, that the heroine is as much the centre of the action as the hero. The rest, including *Macbeth*, are single stars.

"The story, next leads up to, and includes, the *death* of the hero. On the one hand (whatever may be true of tragedy elsewhere), no play at the end of which the hero remains alive is, in the full Shakespearean sense, tragedy; and on the other hand, the story depicts also the troubled part of the hero's life which precedes and leads up to his death; and an instantaneous death occurring by 'accident' in the midst of prosperity would not suffice for it. It is, in fact, essentially a tale of suffering and calamity conducting to death.

"The suffering and calamity are, moreover, exceptional. They befall a conspicuous person. They are also, of some striking kind. They are also, as a rule, unexpected, and contrasted with previous happiness or glory. A tale, for example, of a man slowly worn to death by disease, poverty, little cares, sordid vices, pretty persecutions, however piteous or dreadful it might be, would not be tragic in the Shakespearean sense.

"Such exceptional suffering and calamity, then, affecting the hero, and—we must now add—generally extending far and wide beyond him, so as to make the whole scene a scene of woe, are an essential ingradient in tragedy, and a chief source of the tragic emotions and especially of pity." In order to achieve the effect of making the influence of tragedy extend far beyond the individual hero, Shakespeare chooses his heroes as great personalities. In this connection, Bradley writes: "Tragedy with Shakespeare is concerned always with persons of 'high degree'; often with kings or princes; if not, with leaders in the state like Coriolanus, Brutus, Antony; at the least, as in *Romeo and Juliet*, with members of great houses, whose quarrels are of public moment. There is a decided difference

here between *Othello* and our three great tragedies, but it is not a difference of kind. Othello himself is no mere private person; he is the General of the Republic. At the beginning we see him in the Council-Chamber of the Senate. The consciousness of his high position never leaves him. At the end, when he is determined to live no longer, he is as anxious as Hamlet not to be misjudged by the great world, and his last speech begins,

> Soft you; a word or two before you go.
> I have done the state some service, and they know it.

"And this characteristic of Shakespeare's tragedies, though not the least vital, is neither external nor unimportant. The saying that every deathbed is the scene of the fifth act of a tragedy, has its meaning, but it would not be true if the word 'tragedy' bore its dramatic sense. The pangs of despised love and the anguish of remorse, we say, are the same in a peasant and a prince, but not to insist that they cannot be so when the prince, the triumvir, or the general, has a greatness and dignity of its own. His fate affects the welfare of a whole nation or empire; and when he falls suddenly from the height of earthly greatness to the dust, his fall produces a sense of contrast, of the powerlessness of, man, and of the omnipotence—perhaps the caprice—of Fortune or Fate, which no tale of private life can possibly rival.

"Such feelings are constantly evoked by Shakespeare's tragedies—again in varying degrees. Perhaps they are the very strongest of the emotions awakened by the early tragedy of *Richard II*; where they receive a concentrated expression in Richard's famous speech about the antic Death, who sits in the hollow crown

> That rounds the mortal temples of a king,

grinning at his pomp, watching till his vanity and his fancied security have wholly encased him round, and then coming and boring with a little pin through his castle wall. And these feelings, though their predominance is subdued in the mightiest tragedies, remain powerful there. In the figure of the maddened Lear we see

> A sight pitiful in the meanest wretch,
> Past speaking of in a king."

The fall of the hero leading to his death is brought about by the agency of chance or fate as well as by a fatal flaw in the character of the hero himself. In this connection Thorndike

writes; "Conflicting forces contend for mastery in the hero's breast, and from their confusion he drives on the action that is disastrous. The unusual powers, the best potentialities, of his nature are opposed and thwarted by the forces of chance and circumstances beyond his control; by the force of evil, whether in his own breast or represented by the crime and intrigue of others; and still further, by a defect or deficiency in his own personality. The force of chance, equivalent to the Greek Fate, play a part in all tragic story and drama; the power of evil without or within was the counter-force in medieval drama, and was the theme most powerfully dwelt upon by Shakespeare's immediate contemporaries. The fateful power of incompatibility of temperament with conditions of life seems to have been Shakespeare's own conception."

Bradley dealing with the question of fatal flaw in the character of the hero has remarked: "What we do feel strongly, as a tragedy advances to its close, is that the calamities and catastrophe follow inevitably from the deeds of men, and that the main source of these deeds is character. The dictum that, with Shakespeare, 'character is destiny' is no doubt an exaggeration, and one that may mislead (for many of his tragic personages, if they had not met with peculiar circumstances, would have escaped a tragic end, and might even have lived fairly untroubled lives); but it is the exaggeration of a vital truth".

Referring to the causes of the tragic fall of the hero, Nicoll remarks: "His heroes, one and all, have that peculiar mentality advised by Aristotle; they are all men of high nobility ending in destruction caused by a failing, a fatal flaw, in their own characters. To this fatal flaw, however, Shakespeare has added a peculiar element dependent upon the hero's relations to his environment. Hamlet is thus set in a position demanding will-power and the lack of moral scruple; he has no will-power and is troubled by conscientious doubts. Othello is placed in a position which demands keen observation and subtle intelligence; he has neither. In Lear, common sagacity and appreciation of character was required, and Lear lamentably lacks both. For Macbeth to have withstood his temptations he would have to be content and unaspiring, but Macbeth is filled with longing for a crown, and continually desires aggrandisement. Let us change their respective positions, and at once—Hamlet in Othello's place and Othello in Hamlet's would have meant the entire disappearance of any tragic action.

Shakespeare, then, seems to have striven to impress us with this tragic relationship between the hero and his surroundings. His object, undoubtedly, was to intensify the fate sense in his drama. His tragedies are not mere tragedies in character. Character may be, as some critics have asserted, destiny for his as far Novalis, but that is only part of the truth. Shakespeare's conception of tragedy involved, over and above character, the suggestion of fatal forces, operating on the actions, with which they were incapable of dealing. The minds of these characters are left free, but their desires and their thoughts are only too frequently warped out of their original form. Their thoughts belong to them, but the deeds are none of their own......It is this fate sense, subtly introduced in this manner and intensified by other supernatural elements, which most commentators of Shakespeare are inclined to neglect. In place of the 'Character is Destiny' theory we might state as Shakespeare's final doctrine 'Character and Destiny'."

Regarding the use of chance and the supernatural in the tragedies of Shakespeare, and the relative importance of the character of the hero, Bradley has observed: "Shakespeare introduces the supernatural into some of his tragedies; he introduces ghosts, and witches who have supernatural know-ledge. This supernatural element certainly cannot in most cases, if in any, be explained away as an illusion in the mind of one of the characters. And further, it does contribute to the action, and is in more than one instance an indispensable part of it; so that to describe human character, with circumstances, as always the *sole* motive force in this action would be a serious error. But the supernatural is always placed in the closest relation with character. It gives a confirmation and a distinct form to inward movements already present and exerting an influence to the sense of failure in Brutus, to the stifled workings of conscience in Richard, to the half-formed thought or the horrified memory of guilt in Macbeth, to suspicion in Hamlet. Moreover, its influence is never of a compulsive kind. It forms no more than an element, however important, in the problem which the hero has to face; and we are never allowed to feel that it has removed his capacity or responsibility for dealing with this problem.

"Shakespeare, in most of his tragedies, allows to 'chance' or 'accident' an appreciable influence at some point in the action. Chance or accident here will be found, I think, to mean any ocurrence (not supernatural, for course) which

enters the dramatic sequence neither from the agency of a character, nor from the obvious surrounding circumstances. It may be called an accident, in this sense, that Romeo never got the Friar's message about the potion, and that Juliet did not awaken from her long sleep a minute sooner; an accident that Edgar arrived at the prison just too late to save Cordelia's life; an accident that Desdemona dropped her handkerchief at the most fatal of moments; an accident that the pirate ship attacked Hamlet's ship, so that he was able to return forthwith to Denmark. Now this operation of accident is a fact, and a prominent fact, of human life. To exclude it *wholly* from tragedy, therefore, would be, we may say, to fall the truth. And besides, it is not merely a fact. That men may start a course of events but can neither calculate nor control it, is a *tragic* fact. The dramatist may use accident so as to make us feel this; and there are also other dramatic uses to which it may be put. Shakespeare accordingly admits it. On the other hand, any *large* admission of chance into the tragic sequence would certainly weaken, and might destroy, the sense of the casual connection of character, deed and catastrophe. And Shakespeare really uses it very sparingly. We seldom find ourselves exclaiming, "What an unlucky accident!" I believe most readers would have to search painfully for instances. It is, further, frequently easy to see the dramatic intention of an accident; and some things which look like accidents have really a connection with character, and are therefore not in the full sense accidents. Finally, I believe it will be found that almost all the prominent accidents occur when the action is well advanced and the impression of the casual sequence is too firmly fixed to be impaired.

"Thus it appears that these elements in the tragedy are subordinate, while the dominant factor consists in deeds which issue from character."

(c) The Hero in Shakespearean Tragedy.

Dealing with the common qualities possessed by the heroes of Shakespeare's tragedies Bradley has observed: "They are exceptional beings. The hero, with Shakespeare, is a person of high degree or of public importance, and that his actions or sufferings are of an unusual kind. But this is not all. His nature also is exceptional, and generally raises him in some respects much above the average level of humanity. This does not mean that he is an eccentric or a paragon. Shakespeare never drew monstrosities of virtue, some of his heroes are far

from being 'good'; and if he drew eccentrics he gave them a subordinate position in the plot. His tragic characters are made of the stuff we find within ourselves and within the persons who surround them. But, by an intensification of the life which they share with others, they are raised above them; and the greatest are raised so far that, if we fully realise all that is implied in their words and actions, we become conscious that in real life we have known scarcely any one resembling them. Some, like Hamlet and Cleopatra, have genius. Others, like Othello, Lear, Macbeth, Coriolanus are built on the grand scale; and desire, passion, or will attains in them a terrible force, a predisposition in some particular marked direction: a total incapacity, in certain circumstances, of resisting the force which draws in this direction; a fatal tendency to identify the whole being with one interest, object, passion, or habit of mind. This, it would seem, is, for Shakespeare, the fundamental tragic trait. It is a fatal gift but it carries with it a touch of greatness and when there is joined to it nobility of mind, or genius or immense force, we realise the full power and reach of the soul, and the conflict in which it engages acquires that magnitude which stirs not only sympathy and pity, but admiration, terror, and awe..........

"The easiest way to bring home to oneself the nature of the tragic character is to compare it with a character of another kind. Dramas like *Cymbeline* and *The Winter's Tale* which might seem destined to end tragically, but actually end otherwise, owe their happy ending largely to the fact that the principal characters fail to reach tragic dimensions. And, conversely, if these persons were put in the place of the tragic heroes, the dramas in which they appeared would cease to be tragedies. Posthumus would never have acted as Othello did; Othello, on his side, would have met Iachimo's challenge with something more than words. If, like Posthumus, he had remained convinced of his wife's infidelity, he would not have repented her execution; if, like Leontes, he had come to believe that by unjust accusations he had caused her death, he would never lived on, like Leontes. In the same way the villain Iachimo has no touch of tragic greatness. But Iago comes nearer to it, and if Iago had slandered Imogen and had supposed his slanders to have led to her death, he certainly would not have turned melancholy and wished to die. One reason why the end of *Merchant of Venice* fails to satisfy us is that Shylock is a tragic character, and that we cannot believe

in his accepting his defeat and the conditions imposed on him. This was a case where Shakespeare's imagination ran away with him, so that he drew a figure with which the destined pleasant ending would not harmonise.

"In the circumstances where we see the hero placed, his tragic trait, which is also his greatness, is fatal to him. To meet these circumstances something is required which a smaller man might have given, but which the hero cannot give. He errs, by action or omission; and his error, joining with other causes, brings on him ruin. This is always so with Shakespeare. The idea of the tragic hero as being destroyed simply and solely by external forces is quite alien to him; and not so less is the idea of the hero as contributing to his destruction only by acts in which we see no flaw. But the fatal imperfection or error, which is never absent, is of different kinds and degrees. At one extreme stands the excess and precipitancy of Romeo, which scarcely, if at all, diminish our regard for him; at the other the murderous ambition of Richard III. In most cases the tragic error involves no conscious breach of right; in some (*e.g.*, that of Brutus or Othello) it is accompanied by a full conviction of right. In Hamlet there is a painful consciousness that duty is being neglected; in Antony a clear knowledge that the worse of two courses is being pursued; but Richard and Macbeth are the only heroes who do what they themselves recognise to be villainous. It is important to observe that Shakespeare does not admit such heroes, and also that he appears to feel, and exerts himself to meet, the difficulty that arises from their admission. The difficulty is that the spectator may desire their defeat and even their destruction; and yet this desire, and the satisfaction of it, are not tragic feelings. Shakespeare gives to Richard therefore a power which excites astonishment, and a courage which extorts admiration. He gives to Macbeth a similar, though less extraordinary, greatness, and adds to it a conscience so terrifying in its warnings and so maddening in its reproaches that the spectacle of inward torment compels a horrified sympathy and awe which balance, at the least, the desire for the hero's ruin.

"The tragic hero with Shakespeare, then, need not be 'good' though generally he is 'good' and therefore at once wins sympathy in his error. But it is necessary that he should have so much of greatness that in his error and fall we may be vividly conscious of the possibilities of human nature."

(d) Poetic Justice in Shakespearean Tragedy.

Shakespeare's conception of tragedy involves a recognition of the blindness of chance that cannot be squared with any theory of poetic justice or theological view of the rewards of virtue, though it also involves a recognition of moral law that results in the punishment of its violators. The villains never escape as they do in comedy and the wages of sin are always death, though the reward of virtue is not happiness. In this connection, Nicoll has observed in his book, *Studies in Shakespeare*: "The ghost in Macbeth and Hamlet, the many references to the divine in *Lear*, the free use of tragic irony in *Othello*, all call forth visions of the supermundane. It were needless here to enter into the question of Shakespeare's strange and elusive impartiality; the fact alone may be noted that, while his tragedies depend for their very being on the impression of fatal forces over and above the characters, Shakespeare hardly ever enunciates in so many words his belief in the operation of divine or diabolical presences. He involves his good and bad characters alike in universal destruction ; there is no question in his plays of more systematised poetic justice. What then, it has been asked, was his object in writing his dramas? The question, it would seem, is largely futile. His treatment of Falstaff in his earlier days, of Rosencrantz and Gildenstern in tragic period, and of Antigonus in his later age, shows him not to have entered so fully into his characters as many of the sentimental commentators have cared to make out. His characters are the characters of his imagination, and he stands, godlike, apart. Only the lesser dramatist who has not this power of impartiality thinks of poetic justice : Shakespeare, from his higher position, reflects the whole universe, and does not attempt to inculcate any petty moral by saving the good characters and destroying the evil, while we feel that he himself has sympathy for the nobility and the grandeur of life, we can hardly say that in Shakespeare's view the gods are on the side of good. If we judge from his plays, as we can judge only from his plays, we should say that his attitude, even when he employs the supernatural for his artistic and tragic effect, is distinctly rationalistic. He dogmatises not at all concerning the forces above us; if anything, that which is above us and above his characters is shown as a fate implacable and severe. The good and the noble in his tragedies exist for themselves, not for any outside god or heavenly power."

Raleigh who also holds the view that there is no poetic

justice in the tragedies of Shakespeare and that character is not destiny in them, has observed: "It is not true to say that in these tragedies character is destiny. Othello is not a jealous man; he is a man carried off his feet, wave-drenched and blinded by the passion of love. Macbeth is not a murderous politician; he is a man possessed. Lear no douht has faults; he is irritable and exciting, and the price that he pays for these weaknesses of old age is that they let loose hell. Hamlet is sensitive, thoughtful, generous, impulsive,—'a pure, noble and most moral nature'—yet he does not escape the extreme penalty, and at the bar of a false criticism he too is made guilty of the catastrophe. But Shakespeare, who watched his heroes, awstruck, as he saw them being drawn into the gulf, passed no such judgment on them. In his view of it, what they suffer is out of all proportion to what they do and are. They are presented with a choice, and the essence of the tragedy is that choice is impossible. Coriolanus has to choose between the pride of his country and the closest of human affections. Antony stands poised between love and empire. Macbeth commits a tragic crime; but Shakespeare's tragic stress is laid on the hopelessness of the dilemma that follows, and his great pity for mortality makes the crime a lesser thing. Hamlet fluctuates between the thought which leads no-wither and the action which is narrow and profoundly unsatisfying. Brutus like Coriolanus, has to choose between his highest political hopes and the private ties of humanity. Lear's misdoing is forgotten in the doom that falls upon him; after his fit of jealous anger he awakes to find that he has no further choice, and is driven into the wilderness, a scapegoat for mankind. Othello, like Hamlet, suffers for his very virtues, and the noblest qualities of his mind are made the instruments of his crucifixion.......A profound sense of fate underlies all Shakespearean tragedies. Sometimes he permits his characters, Romeo or Hamlet, to give utterance to it; sometimes he prefers a more ironical method of exposition. Iago and Edmund, alone among the persons of the great tragedies, believe in the sufficiency of man to control his destinies. 'Virtue! a fig says Iago'; ''tis in ourselves that we are thus.' It is 'the excellent foppery of the world,' says Edmund, that 'we make guilty of our disasters the sun, the moon, and the stars.' The event is Shakespeare's only reply to these two calculations. His criticism is contained in the event, which often gives a thrill of new meaning to the speeches of the unconscious agents. The classical irony, as it

is called, which plays with the ignorance of man, and makes him a prophet in spite of himself, is an essential part of Shakespeare's tragic method. The voice of the prophecy is heard in Romeo's speech to the Friar.

> Do thou but close our hands with holy woods,
> Then love-devouring death do what he dare;
> It is enough I may but call her mine.

It is heard again in the last words ever spoken by Juliet to her lover:

> Methinks I see thee, now thou art so low,
> As one dead in the bottom of a tomb;
> Either my eyesight fails, or thou look'st pale.

"It is not from the weakness of indecision that Hamlet so often pays tribute to the forces which lie beyond a man's control. Of what he does rashly he says:

> And praised be rashness for it, let us know
> Our indiscretions sometimes serve us well,
> When our dear plots do pall; and that should teach us,
> There's a Divinity that shapes our ends,
> Rough hew them how we will.

When Horatio tries to dissuade him from the fencing match, he replies. 'Not a whit; we defy augury; there is a special Providence in the fall of sparrow.'

"It runs all through *Othello*, so that only a repeated reading of the play can bring out its full meaning. The joyful greetings of Othello and Desdemona in Cyprus are ominous in every line. 'If it were now to die,' says Othello, ' 'twere now to be most happy.' His words are truer than he knows.

"Without this sense of fate, this appreciation of the tides that bear man with them, whether he swims this way or that, tragedy would be impossible. *Othello* is, in many ways, Shakespeare's supreme achievement—in this, among others, that he gives tragic dignity to a squalid story of crime by heightening the characters and making all the events inevitable. The moralists have been eager to lay the blame of these events on Othello, or Desdemona, or both; but the whole meaning of the play would vanish if they were successful......Shakespeare flinches at nothing: he makes Desdemona kneel to Iago, and sends her to death within the enligtenment that comes at last to Othello when he discovers his hideous error. She could bear more than Othello, for her love had not wavered. There is a strange sense of triumph even in this appalling close. Shakespeare's treatment of the mystery does not much vary from tragedy to tragedy. In *Othello* the chances are well against

the extreme issue: at a dozen points in the story a slip or an accident would have brought Iago's fabric about his ears. Yet out of these materials Shakespeare seems to say, this result may be wrought; and the heaven will permit it. He points to no conclusion unless it be thus, that the greatest and loveliest virtues, surpassing the common measure, are not to be had for nothing. They must suffer for their greatness."

Bradley dealing with this controversial topic has observed. "'Poetic justice' means that prosperity and adversity are distributed in proportion to the merits of the agent. Such 'poetic justice' is in flagrant contradiction with the facts of life, and it is absent from Shakespeare's tragic picture of life; indeed, this very absence is a ground of constant complaint on the part of Dr. Johnson. 'The doer must suffer'—this we find in Shakespeare. We also find that villainy never remains victorious and prosperous at the first. But an assignment of amounts of happiness and misery, an assignment even of life and death, in proportion to merit, we do not find. No one who thinks of Desdemona and Cordelia; or who remembers that one end awaits Richard III and Brutus, Macbeth and Hamlet; or who asks himself which suffered most, Othello or Iago; will ever accuse Shakespeare of representing the ultimate power as 'poetically' just.

"And we must go further. I venture to say that it is a mistake to use at all these terms of justice and merit or desert. In the first place, essential as it is to recognise the connection between act and consequence, and natural as it may seem in some cases (*e.g.* Macbeth's) to say that the doer only gets what he deserves, yet in very many cases to say this would be quite unnatural. We might not object to the statement that Lear deserved to suffer for his folly, selfishness and tyranny; but to assert that he deserved to suffer what he did suffer is to do violence not merely to language but to any healthy moral sense. It is, moreover, to obscure the tragic fact that the consequences of action cannot be limited to that which would appear to us to follow 'justly' from them. And, this being so, when we call the order of the tragic world just, we are either using the word in some vague and unexplained sense, or we are going beyond what is shown to us of this order, and are appealing to faith.

"But in the second place, the ideas of justice and desert are, it seems to me, in *all* cases—even those of Richard III and Macbeth and lady Macbeth—untrue to our imaginative experience. When we are immersed in a tragedy, we feel

towards dispositions, actions, and persons such emotions as attraction and repulsion, pity, wonder, fear, horror, perhaps hatred; but we do not *judge*. This is a point of view which emerges only when, on reading a play, we slip, by our own fault, or the dramatist's, from the tragic position, or when, in thinking about the play afterwards we fall back on our every-day legal and moral notions. But tragedy does not belong, any more than religion belongs, to the sphere of these notions; neither does the imaginative attitude in presence of it. While we are in its world we watch what is, seeing that so it happen-ed and must have happened, feeling that it is piteous, dreadful, awful, mysterious but neither passing sentences on the agents, nor asking whether the behaviour of the ultimate power towards them is just. And, therefore, the use of such language in attempts to render our imaginative experience in terms of the understanding is, to say the least, full of danger."

Though we cannot find 'poetic justice' in the tragedies of Shakespeare, no one can deny that there is a moral order. In the life that they depict there may not be justice; but there is law, because it is the presence of this law or moral order by which we feel that inevitability which a play needs in order to convince. In this connection, Bradley has observsd: "We find practically no trace of fatalism in its more primitive, crude and obvious forms. Nothing, again, makes us think of the actions and sufferings of the persons as somehow arbitrarily fixed beforehand without regard to their feelings, thoughts and resolutions. Nor, I believe, are the facts ever presented that it seems to us if the supreme power, whatever it may be, had a special spite against a family or an individual. Neither, lastly, do we receive impression (which, it must be obsered, is not purely fatalistic) that a family, owing to some hideous crime or impiety in early days, is doomed in later days to continue, a career of portentous calamities and sins. Shakespeare, indeed, does not appear to have taken much interest in heredity, or to have attached much importance to it.

"What then is this 'fate' which the impressions already considered lead us to describe as the ultimate power in the tragic world? It appears to be a mythological expression for the whole system or order of which the individual characters form an inconsiderable and feeble part; which seems to deter-mine, far more than they, their native dispositions and their circumstances, and through these, their actions; which is so vast and complex that they can scarcely at all understand it or

control its workings; and which has a nature so definite and fixed that whatever changes take place in it produce other changes inevitably and without regard to men's desires and regrets. And whether this system or order is best called by the name of fate or no, it can hardly be denied that it does appear as the ultimate power in the tragic world, and that it has such characteristics as these. But the name 'fate' may be intended to imply something more—to imply that this order is a blank necessity, totally regardless alike of human weal and of the difference between good and evil and right and wrong. And such an implication many readers would at once reject. They would maintain, on the contrary, that this order shows characteristics of quite another kind from those which made us give the name of fate, characteristics which certainly should not induce us to forget these others, but which lead us to describe it as a moral order and its necessity as moral necessity.

'Let us then attempt to re-state the idea that the ultimate power on the tragic world is a mortal order. Let us put aside the ideas of justice and merit, and speak simply of good and evil. Let us understand by these words, primarily, moral good and evil, but also every thing else in human beings which we take to be excellent or the reverse. Let us understand the statement that the ultimate power or order is 'moral' to mean that it does not show itself indifferent to both good and evil, or equally favourable to both, but shows itself akin to good and alien from evil. And, understanding the statement thus, let us ask what grounds it has in the tragic fact as presented by Shakespeare.

"Here, as in dealing with the grounds on which the idea of fate rests, I choose only two or three out of many. And the most important is this. In Shakespearean tragedy the main source of the convulsion which produces suffering and death is never good; good contributes to this convulsion only from its tragic implication with its opposite in one and the same character. The main source, on the contrary, is in every case evil; and what is more, it is in almost every case in the fullest sense, not mere plain imperfection but plain moral evil. The love of Romeo and Juliet conducts them to death only because of the senseless hatred of their houses. Guilty ambition, seconded by diabolic malice and issuing in murder, opens the action in *Macbeth*. Iago is the main source of the convulsion in *Othello*, Goneril, Regan and Edmund in *King Lear*. Even when this plain moral evil is not the obviously prime source

within the play, it lies behind it: the situation with which Hamlet has to deal has been formed by adultery and murder. *Julius Ceasar* is the only tragedy in which one is even tempted to find an exception to this rule. And the inference is obvious. If it is chiefly evil that violently disturbs the order of the world, this order cannot be friendly to evil or indifferent between evil and good, any more than a body which is convulsed by poison is friendly to it or indifferent to the distinction between poison and food.

"Again, if we confine our attention to the hero, and to those cases where the gross and palpable evil is not in him but elsewhere, we find that the comparatively innocent hero still shows some marked imperfections or defect,—irresolution, precipitancy, pride, credulousness, excessive simplicity, excessive susceptibility to sensual emotions, and the like. These defects or imperfections are certainly, in the wide sense of the word, evil, and they contribute decisively to the conflict and catastrophe. And the inference again is obvious. The ultimate power which shows itself disturbed by this evil and reacts against it, must have nature alien to it. Indeed its reaction is so vehement and relentless that it would seem to be bent on nothing short of good in perfection, and to be ruthless in its demand for it.

"To this must be added another fact, or another aspect of the same fact. Evil exhibits itself everywhere as something negative, barren, weakening, destructive, a priniciple of death. It isolates, disunites and tends to annihilate not only its opposite but itself. That which keeps the evil man prosperous, makes him succeed, even permits him to exist, is the good in him. When the evil in him masters the good and has its way, it destroys other people through him, but it also destroys *him*. At the close of the struggle he has vanished, and has left behind him nothing that can stand. What remains is a family, a city, a country, exhausted, pale and feeble, but alive through the principle of good which animates it; and, within it, individuals who, if they have not the brilliance or greatness of the tragic character, still have won our respect and confidence. And the inference would seem clear. If existence in an order depends on good, and if the, presence of evil is hostile to such existence, the inner being or soul of this order must be akin to good."

(e) The Comic Relief in Shakespearean Tragedy.

In his tragedies Shakespeare often gives us humorous

passages of scenes in order to provide relief to the overstrained nerves of the audience. Mostly such passages occur in the beginning or middle part of the play, which generally grows more sombre as it nears the end; but their occasional introduction in the fourth act, and even later, affords variety and relief, and also heightens the tragic feelings. Explaining the use of comic relief in tragedy, and its use by Shakespeare, Bethell has observed in his book *Shakespeare and Dramatic Tradition*: "The mixture of comedy and tragedy so often debated by critics who take their Poetics seriously, is founded psychologically on the popular audience's ability to shift rapidly its modes of attention and this ability is merely the exercise of multi-consciousness in temporal succession. Furthermore, such rapid shifts of viewpoints are possible only when consciousness of the play as play safeguards the audience from any expectation of naturalism. 'Comic relief' has always characterised the popular dramatic tradition, from the time when religious drama, gaining relative freedom in the churchyard, began to develop the comic possibilities of Noah's wife and the multitude of friends necessary for the harrowing of hell.....

"Shakespeare's comic relief is traditional but more subtle. We laugh at the grave-diggers (*Ham.* V. i.), before passing to the grave-side meeting of Laertes; but we steadily suspect from the dialogue that it is Ophelia's grave they are preparing, and so are aware simultaneously of tragedy and comedy. This presence of dramatic irony renders the term 'comic relief' inadequate here: double consciousness not only functions in quick transition, but is called on for a simultaneous appraisal of two aspects of the comic situation itself. Nor does comedy entirely disappear from the scene when tragic emotion enters, for there is a grotesque comedy in the exaggerated language of Laertes:

> Now pile your dust upon the quick and dead,
> Till of this flat a mountain you have made,
> To o'top old Pelion, or the skyish head
> Of blue Olympus—

a comedy which jars on the fine ear of Hamlet and makes him rave in hyperbolic rivalry.

> Woo't weep? woo't fight? woo't fast? woo't tear thyself?
> Woo't drink up eisel? eat a crocodile?

Again in *Macbeth*, the Porter scene is more than 'comic interlude'; its theme and atmosphere are appropriate to a play concerned so deeply with supernatural and the eternal validity

of human choice. The grotesque humour of *Lear*, as Prof. Wilson Knight has shown, permeates some of the play's most tragic scenes; for if we are to sympathise with struggling humanity, we are to see at the same time that much of the struggle is folly proceeding from lack of faith. Gloucester's attempted suicide has a certain crude comedy on the stage: the old man falls not over a cliff, as he imagines, but forward on the level ground—on the stage boards, in fact. Edgar assures him : 'Thy life's a miracle' and describes a comically fearsome friend as having tried to lure him to his death, only to be foiled by 'the clearest gods'. Of such stuff is Gloucester's conversation effected.

> Henceforth I'll bear
> Affliction till it do cry out itself
> 'Enough, enough,' and die.

This is the profound humour of religious faith : our direst perils are like the stumble of a blind man, who in his blindness sees a cliff where 'the clearest gods' have prepared smooth ground for an easy fall.

"There is one scene which is usually omitted from modern productions of *Romeo and Juliet*: the scene in which the Capulet household mourn Juliet's supposed death after she has taken Friar Laurence's potion. When Mr. Terence Gray had the play performed in the Festival Theatre at Cambridge, without the usual cuts, this scene was treated as burlesque. Indignant letters showered on the producer, whose reply was to quote from the scene itself......

"*Romeo and Juliet* is an early play, and not one of Shakespeare's best : he uses too frequently the conventionally conceited manner of Petrarchan love poetry. But comparison with Romeo's last big speech in the tomb, faulty though it is by the standard of Shakespeare's own later work, will show that these lamentations over the supposed corpse of Juliet cannot have been intended to move compassion in his audience. The tone of burlesque is clear enough, and only the astonishing ineptitude of Victorian criticism could have missed it.......Its blatancy is necessary to overcome the audience's natural tendency to join the Capulets in their mourning. And the audience must not do this, because their tears are to be reserved for the last scene. Surely it is more ironic, more dramatic and more Shakespearean, to have first a burlesque mourning scene; and then to follow it by real mourning, when the star-

crossed lovers have finally yielded to their destiny! The audience knows, it must be remembered, that Juliet is alive; and the audience has recently had cause to feel annoyed with the whole of Capulet household over the Paris marriage. They are therefore ready enough when prompted to laugh at the gulling of these hard-hearted elders, especially the old Nurse, whose lamentations, most clamorous and most ridiculous of them all, contrast so remarkably with the worldly wisdom of her traitrous advice not long before:

> Beshrew my very heart
> I think you are happy in this second match,
> For it excels your first.

The scene, then, is differentiated into burlesque by the quality of the verse, and it ends in open comedy with Peter and the musicians. Yet even here we have more than comic interlude; the talk of funerals and dirges is not without premonitory effect, and laughter will be trifle uneasy. Then again, in the inappropriate surroundings of a burlesque mourning scene, we have a couple of lines which might well have come later from Romeo in the tomb—serious verse, standing out strangely from the burlesque, and pointing forward to a time when lamentations shall arise in good earnest:

> Death lies on her an untimely frost
> Upon the sweetest flower of all the field.

This sentence among so much nonsense, underlines the necessity for constant attention and complexity of response in the Shakespearean audience."

(f) Aristotle's Views on Tragedy and Shakespeare's Practice.

Shakespearean tragedy exhibits mainly the fundamental elements of tragedy as defined by Aristotle in his *Poetics* though it differs from them in details. The definition of tragedy as given in the Poetics is: "Tragedy is a representation of an action, which is serious, complete in itself, and of a certain limited length; it is expressed in speech made beautiful in different ways in different parts of the play; it is acted, not merely recited, and by exciting pity and fear it gives a healthy outlet to such emotions."

Examining Shakespearean tragedy in the light of this definition, we find that though his tragedies are full of action, yet this action of tragedy has passed from outside the characters to within them, from the boards to the theatre of the soul, so that at last the whole difference between action and passion

tends to fade away. "An action that is serious" means "that is worth troubling about." Here too Shakespearean tragedy makes a slight departure because it is half the child of comedy, not only because Polonius and Macbeth's Porter and Lear's Fool produce some of the most striking scenes in the plays. Character, too, gains as much as the plot; and the tragedies do not profit more by the addition of comic scenes than some of tragic characters by the acquisition of a sense of humour. Often Shakespeare's protagonists remain throughout as serious as those of Sophocles; we hear no laughter from Macbeth or Othello. But for that very reason Hamlet and Cleopatra seem to mark a new era in the portrayal of human nature on the tragic stage. In another way in which Shakespearean tragedy differs from Artistotle's conception of it that whereas for Aristotle tragedy does not imply an unhappy ending, it means simply a drama which renders human life seriously, as contrasted with comedy, which renders it grotesquely, Shakespearean tragedy invariably has an unhappy ending in the death of the hero and the heroine.

Aristotle's theory of *Catharsis* means the purgation of emotions of the human soul of the excessive passions of fear and pity effected by tragedy by giving an outlet to such emotions. In other words, these emotions, which, perpetually repressed, might have made a man sentimental and hysterical, are given a periodic outlet by Tragedy. But this theory does not seem to apply to Shakespearean tragedy. Obviously Shakespeare had not such object in view when he wrote his tragedies, nor do we value them as a means of getting rid of excess emotions. In this connection Lucus remarks in his book, *Tragedy*: "It is perfectly possible that for sentimental and hysterical people *Lear* might have the excellent effect of . liberating their too facile emotions and giving them more restraint in their daily life. But is this either common or important? The theatre is not a hospital. And when we consider the human beings we know, do they in fact seem labouring under this excess of violent passion? Such a theory of tragedy may have been truer for an excitable Mediterranean race ; to us phlegmatic dwellers under northern skies there often seems far more need of something to excite our emotions than to relieve them, to stir up the stagnant pool rather than to give outlet to any pent-up flood of feelings surging within us."

Regarding Aristotle's theory that the emotions of Pity and

Terror are excited by Tragedy, I. A. Richards has explained this doctrine in his book, *Principles of Literary Criticism*: "Pity, the impulse to approach, and Terror, the impulse to retreat, are brought in tragedy to a reconciliation which they find nowhere else, and with them who knows what other allied groups of equally discordant impulses? Their union in an ordered single response is the *catharsis* by which Tragedy is recognised." Examining Shakespearean tragedy in the light of this statement, Lucus has observed: "Are these impulses supposed to balance exactly at every instant? But there are so many instances in a tragedy where one feels pity alone, or terror alone, or neither. Or do they balance only in the long run, so that our terror of the Ghost in *Hamlet* would be set off by our pity for Ophelia, and so on? It would be very odd, surely, if it all worked out so neatly; and very immaterial. Since in such matters it is only possible to speak from one's own experience, I must own that I have seldom felt any impulse at a play to 'approach', and had imagined that such feelings were confined to the sort of old gentleman who thunders in the middle of Othello: 'you great black fool, can't you see it's all right?' And though I have often felt the impulse to 'retreat', it has hardly been terror.....The element of terror in particular seems overworked in this as in other views of tragedy: in fact terror is really too subordinate to pity to be balanced against it."

The tragedies of Shakespeare do not merely arouse pity and terror, but all sorts of emotions, of which the human heart is capable. We go to them not in the least to get rid of emotions, but to have them more abundantly; to banquet, not to purse. Our lives are often dull; they are always of brief duration and confined in scope, but here, vicariously, even the being whose dull morrow cometh and is as today, can experience something more.

Aristotle's view that tragedy is a representation of an action, which is complete in itself, applies to Shakespearean tragedy. Each of his tragedies is a presentation of the world, and is complete in itself as befits a work of art. In this connection Lucus has observed: "There may be a god out of a machine to come hereafter, a happy epilogue; but *Hamlet* or *Macbeth* call for neither of these; they need nothing to perfect them. They stand alone and we forget the rest—the after-life with its readjustments, the martyr's crown, the lost in their livery of flame. Here is a mirror held up to the fashion of this world;

we can look in it and bear to look without being turned to stone."

Shakespeare does not observe the Unities of Time, Place and Action as laid down by Aristotle. His romantic tragedy has a less perfect and close-knit unity; it gains on the other hand a far greater variety of dramatic episodes to select them from. It is free, too, from that forced artificiality which may result from having to squeeze the whole action into a dozen hours; and it is certainly better to strain the spectators' imagination than the facts of life. Lastly, it leaves time for the gradual growth of character.

According to Aristotle tragedy is the story of human blindness leading human effort to checkmate itself—a Tragedy of Error. The *hamartia* is the tragic error; the *peripeteia* is its working to a result the opposite of that intended; the *anagporisis* the realisation of the truth. All these elements are found in Shakespearean tragedy. Hamlet's failure to act, the folly of Lear, the credulity of Othello, the pride of Coriolanus, the love of Antony, or the miscalculation of Romeo are all tragic errors, which lead to their destruction. When Macbeth is lured by the equivocations of devil to make his own perdition sure; when Lear delivers himself into the hands of two daughters that despise him and torments the only one that loves—all these are *peripeteias* in the true sense of Aristotle. His tragic characters get the realisation of truth *i.e., anagporisis* when it is too late. Shakespearean tragedy thus satisfies Aristotle's ideal form of tragedy in which the destruction of hero or heroine is caused by some false step taken in blindness.

Aristotle had no faith in 'poetic justice' and so we find in the Shakespearean tragedy. In this connection Lucus remarks: "Hamlet fails to act and disaster follows; but if we are inclined to suppose that this was a just retribution, we need only to turn to the play immediately preceding, where Hamlet's not less counterpart does act, only to die despairing on Philippi field. The folly of Lear, the credulity of Othello, the pride of Coriolanus, the love of Antony, or the miscalculation of Romeo —more and more as we examine such examples it becomes clear that their tragic errors serve to make their fate not just, but logical and convincing."

There may not be poetic justice in a tragedy, but according to Aristotle there must be law. Here also Shakespearean tragedy satisfies Aristotle's view. His tragedies show that there is moral order in the universe, though its laws are not those of

right and wrong, but of cause and effect. They show that evil in whatever form leads to destruction, and the moral order is akin to good, and alien from evil.

Regarding characters of a tragedy, Aristotle believed that they should be 'true to type.' In the earlier stages of literature men found it a fascinating amusement to classify humanity into its various species; but the classification, once made, quickly became trite and artificial. Shakespeare the creative artist, avoided the typical as eagerly as his predecessors and sought it. Aristotle did not give much importance to woman in tragedy as is clear from his famous remark that 'even a woman may be good.' But in Shakespeare, it is always the woman who takes the lead.

Regarding the diction of tragedy, Aristotle remarked: 'The gift of metaphor is the greatest of all. This alone cannot be taught, but is a mark of natural genius; for it implies inborn eye for likeness.' Shakespeare is a great master of metaphor, and much of his characteristic effect is due simply to his wealth of metaphor."

(g) Conclusion.

The tragedies of Shakespeare are full of revenge, murders and destruction. As pointed out by Thorndike, "The great tragedies are full of disaster, wrong, and suffering. The world they reveal is not the abode of happiness, but of darkness and remorse. Though the bad are punished, the good are not rewarded. Sweetness and innocence suffer and perish along with foulness and malevolence. The noblest spirits are broken, the wages of mortal effort are failure. There are many 'breaches in nature for ruin's wasteful entrance.' Nor does the life hereafter offer a promise of compensation. Death ends all, that is the great catastrophe toward which human endeavour precipitates itself." But in spite of all this the effect on us of the tragedies of Shakespeare is not depressing at all. In this connection, Bradley has observed: "A Shakespearean tragedy is never, like some miscalled tragedies, depressing. No one ever closes the book with the feeling that man is a poor mean creature. He may be wretched and he may be awful, but he is not small. His lot may be heart-rending and mysterious, but is not contemptible. The most confirmed of cynics ceases to be a cynic while he reads these plays ...We seem to have before us a type of the mystery of the whole world, the tragic fact which extends far beyond the limits of tragedy. Everywhere, from the crushed rocks beneath our feet to the soul of

man, we see power, intelligence, life and glory, which astound us and seem to call for worship. And everywhere we see them perishing, devouring one another and destroying themselves, often with dreadful pain, as though they came into being for no other end. Tragedy is the typical form of this mystery, because that greatness of soul which it exhibits oppressed, conflicting and destroyed, is the highest existence in our view. It forces the mystery upon us, and it makes us realise so vividly the worth of that which is wasted that we cannot possibly seek comfort in the reflection that all is vanity."

Discussing the effect of Shakespeare's tragedies on the mind of his audience, Stoll has observed in his essay on *Art and Artifice in Shakespeare*: "The Greeks, at their great period, the classical French at theirs, strove in tragedy for a purgation, in comedy for a castigation, and in both for some measure of justice in the lot meted out to men. Shakespeare and the moderns, whatever their efforts in either direction, fall much farther shorter of these. They have no religious philosophy like that of the ancients; and in tragedy they do not attain as the ancients did to any reassuring adjustment of human suffering to the will of Heaven. For, faith is now broken; life is more intricate and mysterious: the notions not only of the benevolence of heaven of nature, but of the responsibility of man, are undermined.

"How far this was with Shakespeare the case we cannot know, so little do his characters venture upon speculation, so seldom does he appear himself. Certainly he offers no solution to the problem. Though as a man, a Christian and a Protestant, as a dramatist he has no theology or theodicy, no philosophy or 'message'. By some characters the gods are declared to be just; by others, to be unjust; and the only consolation in the presence of the bitter mystery is in patience, acceptance. Instead of the austere but poignant serenity of Sophoclean tragedy at the end, there is, on the one hand, the spirit of quiet sorrow, on the other, a praçtical concern for the punishment of the offenders and the restoration of the State; and the passionate symphony closes quietly, on a rest-tone. A note of reconciliation has, by Professors Dowden and Bradley, been discerned in the superiority of the character of heroes and heroines to the fate which befalls them—in some distant reverberate intimation that what happens to Cordelia does not matter, all that matters is what she is,—and the more senseless and monstrous her fate, the less does it concern her. But the

idea is really a tanscendental inference of the critics' own, not anything which finds a basis in the text. There the beauty of the hero's and heroine's natures makes their tragic fate only the more lamentable, not irrelevant. Why should a dog, a horse, a rat have life, and *thou* no breath at all?' Or, again, a note of reconciliation has been found in Shakespeare's sense of the dreaminess and unreality of life. But the most notable expression of this is on the lips of the bloodstained and unrepentant Macbeth and blameless Prospero, in which cases, though for different reasons, it does no tragic service. Still less does Shakespeare put before us the terrestrial, social problems of an Ibsen or a Hervieu, which, however little in the solution they may purge our emotions, impart to the tragic spectacle a little meaning, though not much. And all that I can discover to alleviate our dismay when for the last time the curtain falls, is, apart from the life-giving spirit of poetry moving and hovering over the stage, the breadth and fairness, the exaltation of pity, in the presentation. There is no cynicism, no pessimism—the vision is too clear and broad. Good and evil are not, as to-day, confused or merged, but are, as Croce says, 'as light opposed to darkness'. Evil is not negative or incidental, but while under suffering it may grow worse, as in Macbeth, good, on the other hand, may grow better, as in Lear. And by evil good is not in the long run triumphed or overshadowed. If, on the one side, there are Goneril, Regan, and Cornwall, Edmund and Oswald, on the other, there are Lear, Cordelia, and the Fool, Kent, Gloucester, Edgar, Albany, and the true-hearted retainers and servants. If many people do ill by those who have done well by them, many others do well by those who have done ill by them. The earth trembles; but the verities are unshaken, the moral values and even social sanctions are unbroken. Justice is administered, not only in the end to the villains, but (though in a disproportionate measure) to the hero and heroine. That is, the casual connection is observed and recognised; and in this tragedy too, once the situation is attained, character becomes its own destiny. The postulate once posited and granted in the case of Othello and Macbeth, Hamlet and Lear, what befalls them is for the most part brought upon them, in the natural course of events, by themselves. And though our sympathies are elicited by artifice and manipulation; and even in a measure for the villains also, as Richard and Macbeth, Iago and Edmund, by endowing them with 'energy of intellect, dauntless versatility of daring, invincible fertility of resource', and apparelling them

(though with a difference) like the heroes themselves in poetry, or bejewelling them with wit and humour: yet by all these claims upon our admiration our judgments are not weakened, nor are the issues confused. In fine, the poetically and dramatically transmuted and transformed material of life still retains life's proportion and values; and Shakespeare's tragedy wears the steadying, though and comforting, aspect of truth. We are made (and all along, as well as at the close) to feel deeply and rightly, and to think sanely, if not to any definite ultimate purpose or upshot; and as by no other tragedy our consciousness is heightened, our imagination widened. There is, however, no piercing of the veil. Of Shakespeare the words of Hazlitt are truer than of Wordsworth: 'He sees nothing loftier than human hopes; nothing deeper than the human heart." Philosophy, transcendentalism does not here apply. But when Professor Bradley reads with the same spirit as the author wrote, he speaks admirably and to purpose.

> 'Its final and total result,' he says of King Lear, 'is one in which pity and terror, carried perhaps to the extreme limits of art are so blended, with a sense of law and beauty that we feel at last, not depression and much less despair, but a consciousness of greatness in pain, and of solemnity in the mystery we cannot fathom.'

Or perhaps Croce describes the result, though more dryly, more adequately.

> 'He knows no other than the vigorous, passionate life upon earth, divided between joy and sorrow, with, around and above it, the shadow of a mystery.' "

Nicoll also referring to the final effect of Shakespeare's tragedies has observed in his book, *Studies in Shakespeare*: "If no poetic justice of the cruder sort appears in his plays, the truly good, however, or those who have some elements of good in their natures, are given one award before their end. A true conception of their own actions, painful as that may be, sheds light in their souls. The new light generally takes the form of a fresh attitude towards life which banishes part of the evil in their beings. Thus, Hamlet rises from the soul-torment and from the self-condemnation into which he had sunk up to a sphere where man's actions are regarded *sub specie ternitis* in the light of the illimitable spaces of the stars; Lear gains a new manhood after his mental and physical torture; and Othello stands mazing on the wonder and nobility of life even while he sees before him the cynical smile of Iago. Macbeth, villain though he be, realises a new beauty in existence when he thinks

of all that might have been—the friends and esteem and the sincerity which by his own action he has irredeemably lost. It is the consciousness of error and the realisation of a fresh attitude to life which is the sad reward of that terrible refinement as of fire through which Shakespeare's heroes pass.

"This fresh attitude towards life, which colours the final moments of all Shakespeare's heroes, provides a peculiar atmosphere for each play. While we have not in the tragedies that strange transcendental idealism which finds fullest expression in *The Tempest*, we are given a mood wherein the whole of life becomes, after all, but a gay or a melancholy pageant. The melodramatic stories, the crude things of this earth, seem to vanish, and a solemn stillness, as of forces far beyond the troubled story, holds the air. It is from this final atmosphere of idealistic calm that there arises the great power of Shakespeare's dramas. We are not left crushed or pessimistic, for we are in the presence of an eternal mystery. The weary calm of Hamlet, Othello's great last soliloquy, Lear's innocent awakening, the tired musings of Macbeth,—on these, and not on death alone, the curtainfolds sweep down."

11. SHAKESPEARE'S HISTORICAL PLAYS.

In all Shakespeare wrote ten historical plays—the three chronicle plays of *Henry VI*, three studies in kings and kingship, namely, *Richard II* and *Richard III* and *King John*, and the trilogy, as is sometimes called, of Shakespeare's ideal monarch, in other words, the two parts of *Henry IV* and the play of *Henry V*. His last play *Henry VIII* was Shakespeare's latest production, written most probably to order, something of an experiment, and lastly, pieced together and completed by Fletcher. Thus for our study of Shakespeare's historical plays we have to consider the first nine plays, which are divided into three groups as stated above.

In these historical plays Shakespeare has given us the story of nearly 350 years, *i.e.* from about 1200 to 1550. The ground plan of these plays is patriotic almost as much as artistic, which is obvious from the poet's reflections at the end of the three plays that conclude respectively three periods of anarchy, *viz.*, another purposes, *i.e.* didactic, because these historical dramas show the ill-success of treason, the wretched end of usurpers, the misery of evil dissensions. That this purpose was set before Shakespeare may be seen in any careful comparisons of his *Richard II*, with Marlowe's *Edward II*, for while Marlowe

keeps silence with respect to his moral, the ethical lesson of Shakespeare's play is proclaimed on every page of it; and the same is true of his other historical dramas.

Giving a brief survey and criticism of Shakespeare's historical plays, Raleigh has observed: "The Historical plays occupy a middle place in the Folio, and, in the process of Shakespeare's development, are a link between Comedy and Tragedy. Plays founded on English history were already popular when Shakespeare began to write; and while he was still an apprentice, their tragic possibilities had been splendidly demonstrated in Marlowe's *Edward II.* He very early turned his hand to them, and the exercise that they gave him steadied his imagination, and taught him how to achieve a new solidity and breadth of representation. By degrees he ventured to intermix the treatment of high political affairs with familiar pictures of daily life, so that what might otherwise have seemed stilted and artificial was reduced to ordinary standards and set against a background of verisimilitude and reality. His comedy, timidly at first, and at last triumphantly, intruded upon his history; his vision of reality was widened to include in a single perspective courts and taverns, kings and highway men, diplomatic conferences, battles, street brawls, and the humours of low life. He gave us the measure of his own magnanimity in the two parts of *Henry IV*, a play of incomparable ease, and variety, and mastery. Hence, having perfected his craft, he passed on to graver themes, and, with Plutarch for his text-book, resuscitated the world drama of the Romans; or breathed life into those fables of early British history which he found in Holinshed......

"In Shakespeare's earlier historical work a certain formality and timidity of imagination makes themselves felt. His bad kings, Richard the Third, and John, are not wholly unlike the villains of melodrama. King Richard is an explanatory sinner:

> Therefore, since I cannot prove a lover,
> To entertain these fair well-spoken days,
> I am determined to prove a villain.

King John, in his murderous instructions to Hubert, expresses a wish for the fitting stage effect, darkness, and the church yard, and the sound of the passing bell. All this is far enough removed from the sureness of Shakespeare's later handling of similar themes. From the first he gave dramatic unity to his histories by building them round the character of the king. To those who lived under the rule of Elizabeth, and whose fathers had been the subjects of Henry VIII, it would have seemed

foolish paradox to maintain that the character of the ruler was a cause of small importance in the making of history. But these kings of the earlier plays are seen distantly, through a veil of popular superstition; the full irony of the position is not yet realised; as if it were so easy to be a good king that nothing but double dose of original sin can explain the failure. It wos a great advance in method when Shakespeare, in *Richard II*, brought the king to the ordinary human level, and set himself to conceive the position from within.

"*Richard II*, is among the histories but *Romeo and Juliet* is among the tragedies, an almost purely lyrical drama, swift and simple. Richard is possessed by the sentiment of royalty, moved by a poet's delight and pomp and quick to recognise the pathos of its insecurity. There is nothing that we feel in contemplating his tragic fall which is not taught us by himself.....It is difficult to condemn Richard without taking sides against poetry. He has a delicate and prolific fancy, which flowers into many dream-shapes in the prison; a wide and true imagination which expresses itself in his great speech on the monarchy of Death; and a deep discernment of tragic issues, which gives thrilling effect to his bitterest outcry.

> Though some of you, with Pilate, wash your hands,
> Showing an outward pity, yet you Pilates
> Have here deliver'd me to my sour cross,
> And water cannot wash away your sin.

For all the intimacy and sympathy of the portraiture, we are not permitted to lose sight of Richard's essential weakness. The greater part of the Third Act is devoted to showing, with much emphasis and repetition, how helpless, and unstable he is at a crisis. If Richard was Shakespeare, as some critics have held, he was not the whole of Shakespeare. Even while the play was being written the design for a sequal and contrast was beginning to take shape. The matter of the plays that were to follow is foreshadowed in the Queen's lamenting address to Richard:

> Thou most beauteous inn,
> Why should hard-favoured Grief be lodg'd in thee,
> When Triumph is become an ale-house guest?

Over against Richard it was Shakespeare's plan to set, not the crafty and reserved Bolingbroke, but his son King Henry V, the darling of the people, a lusty hero, open of heart and hand, unthrifty and dissolute in this youth, in his riper age the support and glory of the nation. The academy where the

hero was to graduate was to be Shakespeare's own school, the life of the tavern and the street.

"It was a contrast of brilliant promise, and, if a choice must be made, it is not hard to determine on which side Shakespeare's fuller sympathies lay. The king who was equal to circumstance was the king for him. Yet Henry V, it may be confessed, is not so inwardly conceived as Richard II. His qualities are more popular and commonplace. Shakespeare plainly admires him, and feels towards him none of that resentment which the spectacle of robust energy and easy success produces in weaker tempers. If Henry V, as Prince and King, seems to fall short in some respects of the well-knit perfection that was intended, it is the price that he pays for incautiously admitting to his companionship a greater than himself, who robs him of his virtue, and makes him a satellite in a larger orbit. Less tragic than Richard, less comic than Falstaff, the poor Prince is hampered on both sides, and confined to the narrower domain of practical success.

"From his first entrance Falstaff dominated the play. The Prince tries in vain to be even with him: Falstaff, as Hazlitt has said, is the better of the two. He speaks no more than the truth when he makes his claim: 'I am, not only witty in myself, but the cause that wit is in other men'....There is more of Shakespeare in this amazing character than in all the poetry of *Richard II.* Falstaff is a comic Hamlet, stronger in practical resource, and hardly less rich in thought. He is in love with life, as Hamlet is out of love with it; he cheats and lies and steals with no hesitation and no afterthought; he runs away or counterfeits death with more courage than others show in deeds of kingly daring. The accidents and escapades of his life give ever-renewed occasion for the triumph of spirit over matter, and show us the real man, above them all, and aloof from them, calm, aristocratic, fanciful; scorning opinion, following his own ends, and intellectual to the fingertips. He has been well called 'a kind of military freethinker'. He will fight no longer than he sees reason. His speech on honour might have been spoken by Hamlet—with what a different conclusion! He is never for a moment entangled in the web of his own deceits; his mind is absolutely clear of cant; his self-respect is magnificent and unfailing. The judgments passed on him by others, kings or justices, affect him not at all, while there are few of these others who can escape with credit from the severe ordeal of his distinterested judgment upon them. Yet for all

his clarity of vision. Falstaff is never feared; there is no grain of malevolence in him; wherever he comes he brings with him the pure spirit of delight.

"How was a character like this to be disposed of? He had been brought in as an amusement, and had rapidly established himself as the chief person of the play. Shakespeare disgraces him and banishes him from the Court. But this was not enough, it was a part of Falstaff's magnanimity that disgrace had never made the smallest difference to him, and had often been used by him as a stepping-stone to new achievement. Even in punishment he was likely to prove dangerous as Napoleon in Elba. There was nothing for it; in the name of the public safety, and from falling into bad hands, Falstaff must be put to death. So he takes his last departure, 'and it had been any christom child,' and King Harry is set free to pursue the life of heroism.

"The historical plays are not, perhaps, among the masterpieces of Shakespeare, but should rather be classed as tentative work, patriotic and moral essays, humours of dramatic experiment; yet taken together, they give ample testimony to the genius of their authors; and they possess some historical as well as artistic and ethical importance."

Discussing the political philosophy embodied in the historical plays of Shakespeare, Dover Wilson has observed in his book *The Essential Shakespeare*: "The political philosophy —if that be not too large a term—of Shakespeare's histories is simple enough. Social stability, in the form of a hierarchy of rank or degree, crowned by the monarchy, was the condition of Elizabethan political thought. In this system the monarchy was all important, and the body politic hung suspended as it were from the throne as the universe itself hung from the floor of heaven. Everything then in literal truth *depended* upon the person of the king. If he was wise, of strong character, and with a firm policy, the balance of the commonwealth was preserved; if he was weak, capricious or evil, the balance was disturbed, lesser lights in the state-heaven started from their spheres in pursuit of personal ambition; and if the worst befell chaos ensued. Shakespeare had been led to brood over such a chaos in the early days of his career. How large a share he had in the writing of *Henry VI* trilogy is a matter of dispute, but during the years 1590 to 1594 he was certainly handling plays which depicted England torn asunder by civil strife, a

prey to foreign invasion, arriving at that last stage of dissolution when father lifted hand against son, son against father, and the lowest elements of the populace rose—as if

> the bounded waters
> Should lift their bosom higher than the shores,
> And make a sop of all this solid globe—

with Jack Cade and his rabble to lead them.

"If the royal house could provide no strong man to save the country from this terrible fate, one of two things might happen: either chaos might itself give birth to some monstrous tyranny such as that depicted in *Richard III*, or one of the planetary nobles, stronger and better than the rest, might usurp the throne and found a new line of king. This second alternative is the theme of *Richard II*. Bolingbroke was necessary: he saved England from chaos by imposing his will upon her; but in doing so, he sinned. Richard for all his weakness and instability was the Lord's anointed. In lifting up his hand against him, Bolingbroke had in effect struck at God himself; and Richard because of 'the divinity that doth hedge a king', assumes at the end of his tragedy the character of the sacrificial victim, the god slain upon the altar, which we moderns only begin to understand by reading a book like Sir James Frazer's *Golden Bough*. The usurper himself is conscious of the sin, and seeks to expiate it by undertaking a crusade in the Holy Land. Other members of the state are conscious of it also, for a weak title is only less dangerous to stability than a weak character; and the political theme of the two parts of *Henry IV* is the disorder that may fall upon the state through this weakness. The rebels are of course the great barons, who feel themselves peers of the man they have set upon the throne and resent his assumed authority; and Hotspur is the chief spokesman of their point of view. But Shakespeare lived at a time when men were becoming very conscious that above the interest of nobles, however brilliant and attractive above the claims of 'honour' and legality, even above the throne itself, there was the cause of

> This happy breed of men, this little world,
> This precious stone set in the silver sea....
> This blessed plot, this earth, this realm, this England.

"Now the only security for England against internal strife and the 'envy of less happier lands' was a king who, with the divine right on his side, that is to say, a clear title to the throne,

and with the sceptre firmly in his grasp, could identify himself fully with his people, could be the leader of a united England, a harmonius common weal, in which the noble, the merchant, the yeoman and the peasant, worked together for the good of the whole. The England of Elizabeth was sufficiently near to this happy consummation for men to dream of its complete fulfilment. Shakespeare expresses his dream in his *Henry V*, in which the whole nation, even the whole British Isles, under the ideal king realise themselves and their unity in the only way at that time considered possible, victorious campaign against a foreign enemy."

12. SHAKESPEARE'S THEATRE AND HIS AUDIENCE.

(a) The Elizabethan Theatre.

Referring to the condition of the theatre during the time of Shakespeare, Ross has written in his book *Outlines of Shakespeare's Plays*: "When Shakespeare came up to London, some time in the late 1580's, there were already in existence two fairy well-defined theatre districts. Both were outside the city limits, because of the opposition to such godless entertainment on the part of the Lord Mayor and the civic council. The first of these districts was Finsbury Field, a holiday section north of the city just outside Bishopsgate, where picnics, athletic contests and other innocent pastimes were held. Here the Theatre (1576) and the Curtain (1577), the first structures in England expressly erected for pleasure resort of a less innocent kind. Here the Rose (1587) had been erected, and as the inaccessibility of the earlier theatre section caused it to decline in popularity, here new playhouses, such as the Swan (1595) and the celebrated Globe (1599), were built. In addition, during Shakespeare's lifetime there were scattered about the suburbs close to London several other playhouses, like the Fortune (1600) and the Red Bull (1605), and within the city, Blackfriars, which, under the guise of a 'private theatre,' managed to evade the civic ordinances against playhouses. Shakespeare's company controlled the Theatre, the Globe, and after 1608, Blackfriars, which they used as a winter house. It was at these three theatres that Shakespeare's plays were first produced."

Referring to the Elizabethan actors, Ross writes: 'For prestige, and to a certain extent for protection against the harsh laws regulating the theatrical profession, Elizabethan actors sought the patronage of some nobleman who was willing to

sponsor them, before the world, but was in no way expected to maintain them. The company thus formed merely adopted his name and livery, and sought its own fortune either by travelling through rural England or by establishing itself in one of the permanent playhouses in London. In both personnel and organisation these Elizabethan troupes differed from the companies of today. They were mere like joint stock companies than anything else in the modern theatre, except that the better companies of Shakespeare's time were much more stable than such organisations today. The Shakespearean troupe, for example, has a continuous history from its organisation in 1574 to the closing of the theatres by Government edict in 1642; and there were others with comparable records, just as there were some which sprang up and died quickly.

"The secret of this stability lay perhaps in the fact that most of the companies were organised upon profit-sharing basis, and this was specially true of the Chamberlaine's King's Company, to which Shakespeare was attached. In this troupe the leading actors shared in the profit of the aggregation, and a select group of the members were also the joint owners of the playhouse in which they acted. The younger actors receiving wages looked forward to being admitted some day as full members of the company or as 'housekeepers'. Moreover the leading dramatists were not free-lances, but were attached more or less permanently to one of the better troupe, and hence thoroughly familiar with the talents and eccentricities of each of the actors who would play the roles he was creating. Most difficult for us to understand is the circumstance that the Elizabethan never saw an actress on the stage. All of the women's parts in plays were acted by boys, whose lithe figures and unchanged voices made them suitable for their roles. They were not rank amateurs, but the apprentices to the individual actors in the company, and, as the understudies and potential successors of their masters, were well trained as many an actress today. Indeed some private theatre companies which grew up round the royal singing schools, were composed entirely of boys and enjoyed immense popularity with the Court and the London social set. As a result of this ladder-like organisation, producing plays for an Elizabethan troupe must have been more like writing for a team of actors than for a modern company. At least it is pleasant to think of Shakespeare's plays as having been tailor-made for a troupe of stagers who had worked together for a period of years and whose physical, mental,

and professional peculiarities he knew perfectly and made dramatic capital of."

Describing the structure of the Elizabethan stage, Bradley has observed in his essay on "Shakespeare's Theatre and Audience" in his book, *Oxford Lectures on Poetry*: "Our present stage may be called a box with one of its sides knocked out. Through this opening which has an ornamental frame, we look into the box. Its three upright sides are composed of movable painted scenes, which are changed from time to time during the course of the play. Before the play and after it the opening is blocked by a curtain dropped from the top of the frame; and this is also dropped at intervals during the performance, that the scenes may be changed.

"In all these respects the Elizabethan arrangement was quite different. The stage came forward to about the middle of the area; so that a line bisecting the house would have coincided with the line of footlights, if there had been such things. The stage was therefore a platform viewed from both sides, as well as from the front; and along its sides, as well as in front of it, stood the people who paid least, the groundlings, sometimes punningly derided by dramatists as 'the men of understanding'. Obviously, the sides of this platform were open; nor were there movable scenes at the back of it; nor were there any front curtain. It was overshadowed by a projecting roof; but the area, or 'yard' where the groundlings stood, was open to the weather, and accordingly the theatre could not be darkened. It will be seen that when the actors were on the forward part of the stage, they were, (to exaggerate a little) in the middle of the audience, like performers in a circus now. And on this forward naked part of the stage most of a Shakespearean drama was played. We may call it the main or front stage.

"If we now look towards the rear of this stage, what do we find? In the first place, while the back of our present-day box consists of a movable scene, that of the Elizabethan stage was formed by the 'tiring-house', or dressing-room, of the actors. In its wall were two doors, by which entrances and exists were made. In the play it might represent a room, a house, a castle, the wall of a town, and the doors played their parts accordingly. Again, when a person speaks 'from within' that doubtless means that he is in the tiring house, opens one of the doors a little, and speaks through the chink. So apparently did the prompter.

"Secondly, on the top of the tiring-house was the 'upper stage' or 'balcony', which looked down on the platform stage... Though the whole or part of it on some occasions, or in some theatres, was occupied by spectators, the whole or part of it was sometimes used by actors and was indispensably requisite to the performance of the play.'Enter above' or 'enter aloft' means that the actor was to appear on this upper stage or balcony....The reader of Shakespeare will at once remember many scenes where the balcony was used. Juliet talked to Romeo from it; and from it Romeo ('one kiss and I'll descend') 'goeth down', to the main stage. Richard appeared there between the two bishops; and there the spectator imagined Duncan murdered in his sleep. But they could not look into his chamber. The balcony could be concealed by curtains, running like all Elizabethan stage curtains, on a rod.

"In the third place, there was, towards the back of the main stage a part of that could be curtained off and so separated from the front part of the stage. Let us call it the back stage.....Here was the curtain through which the actors peeped at the audience before the play began, and at which the groundlings hurled apples and other missiles to hasten their coming or signify disapproval of them. And this back stage was essential to many performances, and was used in a variety of ways. It was the room where Henry IV lay dying; the cell of Prospero, who draws the curtains apart and shows Ferdinand and Miranda playing at chess within. Finally, the back stage accounts for those passages where, at the close of a death scene, there is no indication that the corpse was carried off the stage. If the death took place on the open stage, as it usually did, this of course was necessary, since there was no front curtain to drop; and so we usually find in the dialogue words like, 'Take up the bodies' (*Hamlet*) or 'Bear them from hence' (*King Lear*), but Desdemona was murdered in her bed on the back stage; and there died also Othello and Emilia; so that Lodovico orders the bodies to be 'hid', not carried off. The curtains were drawn together, and the dead actors withdrew into the tiring-house unseen, while the living went off openly."

The Elizabethan stage was bare and without any front curtain. Painted scenery and properties in the modern sense were only sparingly used. There was little in the way of artificial lighting, yet spectacular effects were obtained by means of rich costumes, gestures, dramatic grouping of actors, procession,

music dancing and all kinds of bodily activity. The rude architectural background supplied by the stage was not felt by Elizabethans in an open place. Costume was something more than idly decorative; it was a note of rank, profession, or trade, and so helped to tell the story. The necessary outlay on costume was the heaviest part of theatrical expense, and the chief actors were furnished with a varied and splendid wardrobe.

Regarding the influence of the contemporary stage on Shakespeare's drama, and the way he made use of it to produce the desired effects, Ross has observed: "To many readers of Shakespeare who do not take the trouble to understand his stage, the conditions under which he and his contemporaries worked seem not only primitive but decidedly limiting to the playwright as well. Yet, taken as a whole, Shakespeare's theatre was adequate for his needs and a far more resourceful place than is sometimes supposed. Change of scene could be effected quickly without loss of continuity, and consequently the action of a play could be rapid and continuous. Drama under such conditions was essentially a narrative art, play-construction was looser than it is to-day, and as a result the technique of the average Elizabethan play was more like that of movie than that of a modern drama. On the other hand, the absence of a front curtain, painted scenery, and artificial lighting made certain modern stage effects impossible. Hence, there is little attempt at local colour in the average Elizabethan play and a disarming informality about the precise location or time of every scene. The producer simply used the built-up scenery at his disposal in combinations that pleased him. His stage was a setting—no more—and he permitted the audience to concentrate its attention upon the play. Whenever place or time mattered, some reference to them could be introduced into the dialogue, and if special atmosphere or dramatic effect were needed, they could be created by the poet's pen. Hence, it is to the Elizabethan stage that we are indebted in great measure for the exquisite poetry of Shakespeare. Such conditions, moreover, encouraged a greater imaginative co-operation on the part of the audience in the production of a play, and this active participation was further increased by the informality of the platform stage. With such intimacy, soliloquies, asides, and long set speeches are natural and not absurd as they are in the modern theatre. These are but a few of the ways in which the physical conditions of the theatre and the characteristics of the Elizabethan drama explain one another, yet they

should make clear that Elizabethan theatrical conditions begot a whole code of conventions which Shakespeare accepted—just as he would accept those of modern theatre, were he writing to-day. On his stage he was a king of infinite space, though to our eyes he may seem to have been bounded by a nutshell."

Regarding the employment of boy-actors for feminine roles, Raleigh has observed: "No woman appeared on the public stage, and the parts of the woman were taken by boys. This is perhaps the most startling feature in the usage of the Elizabethan stage. When Cleopatra describes the ignominy of being led to Rome, she alludes to it:

> The quick comedians
> Extemporally will stage us, and present
> Our Alexanderian revels : Antony
> Shall be brought drunken forth, and I shall see
> Some squeaking Cleopatra boy my greatness
> I' the posture of a whore.

It is strange to speak that a boy spoke these lines. And the same irony of situation must surely have become almost dangerous in the speech of Volumina, the Roman matron :

> Think with thyself,
> How more fortunate than all living women
> Are we come hither.

So too with Shakespeare's favourite device of putting his heroines into boys' dress. The boys who acted Rosalined, Viola, and Julia, had the difficult task of pretending to be girls disguised as boys. In spite of all this, it may be doubted whether Shakespeare has not suffered more than he has gained by the genius of the latter-day actresses, who bring into the plays a realism and a robust emotion which sometimes obscures the sheer poetic value of the author's conception. The boys were no doubt very highly trained, and amenable to instruction; so that the parts of Rosalind and Desdemona may well have been rendered with a clarity and simplicity which served as a transparent medium for the author's wit and pathos. Poetry, like religion, is outraged when it is made a platform by those who are its ministers. With the disappearance of the boy-players the poetic drama died in England, it has had no second life."

Regarding the influence of contemporary actors on the plays of Shakespeare Reese has observed: "Shakespeare visualised his plays not merely in the general terms of the actor's art but

in a particular relation of the actors of his own Company. He adapted his female roles to the limited resources of his boy-actors, and when the outstanding talents of a particular boy liberated his genius, he was able to create the heroines of his great comedies. Earlier, it was possibly the lack of competent boys which accounted for the poverty of the female parts in the histories; and later, the personality of another gifted boy—probably Richard Robinson—inspired the guileless innocence of Marina, Perdita, and Miranda. The Elizabethan dramatist was not in the carefree position of being able to write the parts which his fancy decreed and distribute them among the whole of the theatrical profession; he had to cast his plays from perhaps a dozen sharers and a few hired men, whose quirks and capabilities, if he were a regular writer for the stage, were known to him. So precisely did Shakespeare match his invention to his available resources that a learned student of the Elizabethan theatre, Prof. Baldwin, has conjectured that each member of the Company had his special 'line' and the plays were written so that each might display his particular skill. The theory perhaps underestimates the versatility of a repertory company: Elizabethan actors could make a passable attempt at any sort of part; but it undoubtedly contains a substantial truth, and we know that in writing a play Shakespeare often had in his mind's eye not a stage character but an nidividual actor. When Dogberry is to speak, his words are not prefixed with his stage name but with the name of Kempe, who played the part. There was an actor of extraordinary thinness whose appearance is detectable in many plays of the period. His name was John Sinklo, and probably he was not a very good actor, for although he had a long career in the theatre, he never became a sharer. But his leanness was one of those popular and endlessly recurring jokes of which his audiences never tire, and from the frequent references to it we can discover many of the parts he played. The stage-directions show that he played a keeper in *3 Henry IV*; he was a player in the Induction to *Taming of the Shrew*. Romeo's Apothecary with famine in his cheeks; Dr. Pinch, the 'mere anatomy'; 'the nuthook' Beadle in *2 Henry IV*. Other possibilities suggest themselves, such as Starveling, Robert Faulconbridge, Old Gobbo. Like the lame actor in Moliere's Company, he had parts written round his physical disability; and when Shakespeare wants him on the stage in one of his roles he merely writes, 'Enter Sinklo'. A similar exploitation of the physical qualities of actors occurs in the famous feminine combination of the comedies, Hermia and

Helena, Rosalind and Celia, Portia and Nerissa, Beatrice and Hero: one of the boys was short, but the other was tall, so tall to be playing women's parts that frequent comment on it was felt to be necessary.

"When Shakespeare wrote *Cymbeline*, he had to take account of another and somewhat inconvenient sort of physical disability. He knew that Guiderius and Arviragus, the two lost Princes, would be played by two adolescents who until lately had been cast for female parts. They could play women no longer, for their voices had at length betrayed them and were at that vexatious, intermediate stage of 'breaking' when public speaking is something of a hazard. Shakespeare wanted them to sing the dirge over their seemingly dead 'brother', Imogen; but it would not be safe for them to sing, or not without some previous apology in anticipation of disaster. So the song is preceded by this short dialogue:

Arviragus.

And let us, Polydore, though now our voices
Have got the mannish crack, sing him to the ground,
As once our mother ; use like note and words,
Save that Euriphile must be Fledele.

Guiderius.

Cadwal,
I cannot sing ; I 'll weep and word it with thee ;
For words of sorrow out of tune are worse
Than priests and fanes that lie.

Arveragus.

We'll speak then.
(**Cym IV**. ii. 225.)

They break into the lovely melancholy of 'Fear no more the heat o' the sun'; and, in small things, there is no more striking evidence of Shakespeare's genius, than that this song is of Shakespearean songs the best fitted to be spoken. Indeed, a musical setting for the singing voice seems rather to adulterate its beauty, and the usual practice in modern productions is for the lines to be spoken, not sung, against a musical background; a strange consequence of the fleeting accident that two lads in Shakespeare's Company happened to be breaking into voices when *Cymbeline* was written."

(b) Elizabethan Audience

The audience whom Shakespeare sought to entertain by his plays belonged to all classes of London citizens. Middleton

Murry in his book, *Shakespeare*, giving a list of these, writes: "First, the people of London, as distinct from the wealthy citizens of the city who, through their Lord Mayor, their Aldermen and their Common Council, controlled, within the rather narrow limits set by the prerogative, the government of the City. London in those days, fulfilled the function of a second University. Nearly every country gentleman, great or small, went up there to read a little law at one of the Inns of Court, to equip him for his duties as Justice of the Peace and manager of his own estates....No better audience than those men for the country atmosphere in which Shakespeare's plays were steeped. They were the staple of the better-class audience of the players. They were not budding lawyers, for those would be at their books in the afternoon, but country-gentlemen finishing.....Two other main elements in this better-class audience, ing.....Two other main elements in this better-gentlemen finish- are singled out by contemporary observers as constant: the gentlemen of the Court, and the captains and soldiers temporarily out of employment. Below them, in rank and situation, were the groundlings, who lent themselves to a neat but obvious jibe as 'grave understanders'. They come in for some hard knocks as a barbarous crew, with 'no brains but grounded judgments'; but the chief nuisance of the stage was the gallant on the stage. The courtier, it seems to me, was not a very important part of the Elizabethan audience which Shakespeare had to please."

The audience with which Shakespeare had to come to terms was not an audience of aristocrats, but of the common folk, 'the groundlings', who paid their pennies and two pences. It is a mistake to consider these groundlings as fit for nothing else but dumb-shows and noise. It were these who kept the Elizabethan drama alive. In this connection, Sission writes in *A Companion to English Studies*: "The Globe was never an aristocratic theatre. His 'Prince Hamlet' pleased all, said a contemporary. The fact is that Shakespeare found fit hearers among all classes of London citizens. If they had a fault, it was that of uncritical catholicity of taste. It was the pit that above all demanded the poetic drama as well as mirth. It was they who rejoiced in patriotic historical plays and knew too little of the Court to be disillusioned. They saved the Elizabethan drama from becoming overeducated and urbanised, and preserved its strength and university, despite theorists, men of wit and fashion, and experimenters like Ben Jonson. Incurably

romantic and emotional, they longed for romance even if they did, while in the theatre, crack nuts, buy and drink bottled ale, and occasionally fall to riot. And Shakespeare, at heart in full sympathy with men of his own make, wrote at least as much for them as for their betters, and reconciled all in one delight."

Referring to the influence of the Elizabethan audience on Shakespeare, Bradley writes in his book, *Oxford Lectures on Poetry*: "Shakespeare, we know, was a popular playwright. I mean not only that many of his plays were favourites in his day but that he wrote, mainly at least for the more popular kind of audience, and that, within certain limits, he conformed to its tastes. He was not to our knowledge, the author of masques composed for performance at Court, or in a great mansion or of dramas intended for a University or one of the inns of court; and though his company for some time played at the Blackfriars, we may safely assume that the great majority of his works were meant primarily for a common or 'public' theatre like the Globe. Accordingly dramatists who express their contempt for the audience, and their disapproval of those who consult its tastes, often discriminate between the audiences at the private and public theatres, and reserve their unmeasured language for the latter. It was for the latter that Shakespeare mainly wrote; and it is pretty clear that Jonson, who greatly admired and loved him, was still of opinion that he condescended to his audience.

"We may describe Shakespeare's practice in broad and general terms by saying that he neither resisted the wishes of his audience nor gratified them without reserve. He accepted the type of drama that he found, and developed it without altering his fundamental character. And in the same way, in particular matters, he gave the audience what it wanted, but in doing so gave it what it never dreamed of. It liked tragedy to be relieved by rough mirth, and it got the Grave-diggers in *Hamlet* and the old countrymen in *Antony and Cleopatra*. It liked a 'drum and trumpet' history, and it got *Henry V*. It liked clowns or fools, and it got Feste and the Fool in *King Lear*....His public dearly loved to see soldiers, combats and battles as no playwright now would dream of exhibiting..... Few playgoers now can appreciate a fencing-match and much fewer a broad-sword and target-fight. But the Elizabethan public went to see performances of this kind as we go to see cricket or football matches. And this was probably another reason why Shakespeare's battles so often consist of single com-

bats and why these scenes were beloved by the simpler folk among his audience. Shakespeare introduced songs and dances also in order to gratify the popular appetite."

But Shakespeare was not a slave of his audience. His object certainly was to please them, but he did not give up for their sake the high ideals of drama he had set before himself; otherwise they could not have a universal appeal. In this connection, Middleton Murry has remarked: "If Shakespeare had come to terms with his audience, the terms seem to have been pretty his own terms. That Shakespeare meant to please his audience if he could--that is certain; but it is equally certain that he meant to please himself in doing so. It seems, on the face of it, extravagant to suppose that the man who felt about his audience as Shakespeare felt about it would ever have admitted that what he meant by a play was no more than his audience understood it. He was not of so easy and so plain a sop!"

13. SHAKESPEARE'S RELATIONS WITH HIS AGE.

In order to have a proper appreciation of Shakespeare's works we have to take into account the great Elizabethan age in which he lived because no great writer can remain uninfluenced by his environment. In this connection, Dover Wilson points out. "Though Shakespeare may be for all times, he was also very much of an age, and unless we grasp at least the main features of that age we are likely to miss much that is significant about him. Above all, his spiritual development, which is evident in the poems and plays, now we know their approximate order, can only be fully apprehended if we consider it in relation to the spiritual condition of the time in which he lived. The essential Shakespeare will be altogether misconceived if we think of him as one who stood apart from the life of his time. On the contrary, we may look for him at the very heart of that life, and picture him an eager spirit following the doings of Essex and Raleigh, of Drake and Roger Williams, of Francis Bacon and Robert Ceci, with the keenest possible interest. Not 'his tragic life story', of which we know nothing, but the life at the two dominant influences on the Elizabethan age were the Renaissance and the Reformation, and Shakespeare was profoundly influenced by both." Refering to the influence of the Renaissance on Shakespeare, Raleigh has observed : "The main prompting of Shakespeare the poet is the love of beauty for beauty's sake. It is at this point that Shakespeare was touched by the new spirit of the Renaissance. That great movement of

the mind of man brought with it the exhilaration of an untried freedom and the zest of an unlimited experiment; but it took the human soul from its station in a balanced and rounded scheme of things, to deliver it over to every kind of danger and excess. The wonderful system of Catholic theology gave man his place in the universe; it taught him his duties, allowed for his weakness, and at all times exhibited him in so complex a scheme of fixed relations, mundane and celestial, extending beyond the very bounds of thought, that only a temper of absolute humility could carry the burden lightly or look without terror down those endless vistas of law and providence. From his servant's estate in this great polity he was released by the Renaissance, and became his own master in chaos, free to design and build and inhabit for himself. The enormous nature of the task, which after three centuries is still hardly begun, did not at first oppress him; he was like a child out of school, trying his strength and resources in all kinds of fantastic and extravagant attempts. It was an age of new philosophy, new arts, new cults; none of them modest or sober, all full of the spirit of the bravado, high-towering but not broad-based, erected as monuments to the skill and prowess of the individual. That arrogance and self-sufficiency of craft which by the men of the Renaissance was called virtue is found in many different guises; and Shakespeare did not wholly escape the prevalent infection. What the love of power was to Marlowe, the love of beauty was to him. In his early poems the Venus of the Renaissance takes him captive:

> Leading him prisoner in a red rose chain.

The devout religion of the eye and ear is all-in-all to him: his world is a world of gleaming forms and beautiful speech."

Referring to the the influence of the Reformation on the Elizabethan age and drama, and particularly on Shakespeare, Dowen has observed in his book, *Shakespeare—His Mind and Art*: "Catholicism had endeavoured to sanctify things secular by virtue proceeding towards them from special ecclesiastical persons, and places and acts. The modern spirit, of which Protestantism is a part, revealed in the total life of men a deeper and truer sanctity than can be conferred by touches of any wand of ecclesiastical magic. The burden of the curse was lightened. Knowledge was good, and men set about increasing the store of knowledge by interrogation of nature, and by research into the life of mankind as preserved in ancient liter-

atures. Visible pomp was a thing which the eye might frankly enjoy; men tried to make life splendid....Beauty was now confessed to be good; not the beauty of paradise which Angelico painted but that of Lionardo's Monna Lisa. The earth and those excellent creatures, man and woman, walking upon it, formed a spectacle worth a painter's soul. One's country was for the present not the Heavenly Jerusalem, but a certain defined portion of this habitable globe; and patriotism became a virtue, and queen-worship a piece of religion. Conscience was a faithful witness, an actual sense of sin and an actual need of righteousness were individual concerns, belonging to the inmost self of each human being, and not to be dealt with by ecclesiastical mechanism, by sale of indulgence, or dispensation of a Pope. Woman was neither a satanic bait to catch the soul of man, nor was she the supernatural object of medieval chivalric devotion; she was no miracle, yet no less nor other than that endlessly interesting thing—woman. Love, friendship, marriage, the ties of parent and child, jealously, ambition, hatred, revenge, loyalty, devotion, mercy—these were not insignificant affairs because belonging to a world which passes away; human life being of importance, these, the blessings and curses of human life, were important also. Heaven may be very real; we have a good hope that it is so; meanwhile here is our earth, a substantial, indubitable fact.

"The self-conscious ethics of the Elizabethan period find an imaginative utterance in Spenser's *Faerie Queene*. Spenser's view of human life is grave and earnest; it is that of knightly encounter with principalities and powers of evil. Yet Spenser is neither medieval nor essentially Puritan; the design of the *Faerie Queene* is in harmony with a general Elizabethan movement. The general end of Spenser's poem is 'to fashion a gentleman or noble, person in virtuous and gentle discipline.' A grand self-culture is that about which Spenser is concerned; not as with Bunyan the escape of the soul to heaven; not the attainment of supernatural grace through a point of mystical contact, like the vision which was granted to the virgin knight of the medieval allegory. Self culture, the formation of a complete character for the use of earth, and afterwards, if need be, for the uses of heaven—this was the subject sufficient for the twenty-four books designed to form the epic of the age of Elizabeth.

"Poetry in this Elizabethan period is put upon a purely human basis. No fate broods over the actions of men, and the history of families; the only fatality is the fatality of character.

Luck, an outstanding element, helping to determine the lives of mortals, and not reducible to known law, luck good and bad, Shakespeare readily admits; but luck is strictly a thing in the course of nature. The divinity which shapes our ends works efficiently, but secretly. Men's lives in the dramas of Shakespeare are not disorganised and denaturalised by irruptions of the miraculous. The one standing miracle is the world itself. That power and virtue which can achieve wonders, which can do higher things than all the feats of grotesque magic recorded in the Legend, is simply a noble or beautiful soul of man or woman. If we recognise a moral order or the world a divine presence, then the divine presence is never absent from the Shakespearean world.

"A vigorous, mundane vitality—this constitutes the basis of the Elizabethan drama. Vigour reveals on the one hand the tragedy of life. Love and hatred, joy and sorrow, life and death being very real to a very vigorous nature, tragedy becomes possible. To one who exists languridly from day to day neither can he cross and passion of any heart be intelligible, nor the solemn intensities of joy, the glories, resurrection and ascension of life and soul. The heart must be all alive and sensitive before the imagination can conceive with swift assurance and not hesitation or error, extremes of rapture and of pain. The stupendous mass of Lear's agony, and the spasm of anguish which makes Othello writhe in body as in mind, fell within the compass of same imagination, that included at the other extremity the trembling expectation of Troilus, before the entrance of Cressida,—into which the dramatist enters so profoundly, while at the same time he holds himself ironically aloof,—the fulness of satisfied need when Posthumus embraces Imogen,—

> Hang there like fruit, my soul,
> Till the tree die !

and the rapture (almost transcending the bounds of consciousness) of Pericles upon the recovery of his long-lost Marinda:

> O Helicans, strike me, honour'd sir ;
> Give me a gash, put me to present pain ;
> Lest this great sea of joys rushing upon me
> O'erbear the shores of my mortality,
> And drawn me their sweetness.

On the other hand this same vigour enables men to perceive and enjoy the comedy of life; for vigour enjoys folly; when it

laughs, like Shakespeare's Valentine, 'it laughs like a cock. One who is thoroughly in earnest is not afraid to laugh; he knows that he may safely have his laugh out, and that it will not disturb. te solid relations of things. It is only when we are half in earnest that we cherish our seriousness, and tremble lest the dignity of our griefs or joys should be impaired. And accordingly when great tragedies can be written joyous comedies can be written also. But when life grows base or trivial, when great tragedy ceases (as in the period of the Restoration), when false heroics, and showy sentimentality take the place of tragic passion, then the laughter of men becomes brutal and joyless,—the cracking of thorns under a pot."

A vigorous vitality was the main characteristic of the Elizabethan age, as well as of the Elizabethan drama, and Shakespeare with his love for beauty, his desire for knowledge, his hearty sense of natural enjoyment, his zest for life, his curiosity to understand human passions, grief and happiness, was the chief representative and exponent of that great age in English history and literature. He yielded his whole being to boundless and measureless devotion to the new humanistic movement, and he reached to the ultimate truths of human life and character through a supreme and indivisible energy of love, imagination, and thought. As pointed out by Dowden, "Our imagination can hardly find a place for Shakespeare in any part of the Middle Ages. Either they could transform him, or he would confound and disorganise them. With his ever-present sense of truth, his realisation of fact, and especially of that great fact, a moral order of the universe, we cannot think of Shakespeare among the men of pleasure, scepticism, and irony; he could not stay with the shallow lubricities of Boccaccio. Neither can we picture to ourselves an ascetic Shakespeare, suppressing his desire of knowledge, transforming his hearty sense of natural enjoyment into curiosities of mystic joy, exhaling his strength in sighs after an *Urbs Beata Jerusalem*, or in tender lamentation over the vanity of human love and human grief."

14. SHAKESPEAREAN CRITICISM.

From his own time up to our own such a vast amount of criticism of Shakespeare has appeared in three languages, English, French and German, and it is still increasing every day at a compound interest, that the student of Shakespeare may well wonder whether he should consume his time over

Shakespeare criticism at all. But for a proper understanding of Shakespeare such a knowledge is essential. In this connection, T. S. Eliot has remarked in his essay on "Shakespearean Criticism" included in *A Companion to Shakespeare Studies*: "Why then, to begin with, should we read all that has been written obout Shakespeare, in three hundred years, merely because we want to understand Shakespeare? Should we not just soak ourselves in the poetry and drama of Shakespeare, and produce our own opinions, unaided and unencumbered by antiquity, about Shakespeare? But when a poet is a great poet as Shakespeare is, we cannot pudge of his greatness unaided; we need both the opinions of other poets, and the diverse views of critics who were not poets, in order to help us to understand."

Regarding the 'progress' made by Shakespeare criticism during the three centuries, T. S. Eliot writes: "In the history of the criticism of Shakespeare which is primarily or strictly literary and dramatic there is a certain 'progress', but only such progress as is possible as a result of the improved texts, the increased knowledge about the conditions of the Elizabethan stage, about the life of Shakespeare himself, and about the times in which he lived. Otherwise it would be imprudent to say that we are approximating towards a final goal of understanding, after which there will be nothing new to be said; or retrospectively, to assume that A. C. Bradley's criticism of Shakespeare is 'better' than that of Dryden. Shakespeare criticism will always change as the world changes.....We find it difficult, of course, to believe that the view of Shakespeare to be taken 100 years hence can be very different from our own. On the other hand, we are inclined to assume that the criticism of Shakespeare written before the nineteenth century is less illuminating than that written since. Neither assumption is quite true. There is undeniably an aspect in which early criticism may be seen as substructure of that of the nineteenth century. We have to admit that the fuller understanding of Shakespeare's greatness came slowly just as it comes slowly, I believe, in the life of the individual reader. But Shakespeare criticism cannot be appreciated without some understanding of the time and of place in which it is written, without allowing for its nearness or remoteness in place or time from the object and for its inevitable development in the future. The view of Shakespeare taken by different men at different times in different places forms an integral part of the development and change of European civilisation during the last 300 years."

Shakespeare criticism, in fact, from his own time to ours, though consisting of diverse voices, has evolved itself into a pattern. Every age had its own problems and difficulties in assessing the value of Shakespeare's work, and it is by combining the results of all such efforts, contemporary as well as later, that we can trace that pattern, which in other words, may be called the general attitude of critics towards Shakespeare. In this connection, T. S. Eliot writes : "The contemporary of the poet has both obvious limitations and obvious advantages; is too near to the object to see clearly or in perspective ; judgment may be distorted by enthusiasm or prejudice ; on the other hand he enjoys the advantage of a freshness unspoilt by generations of other men's views. The later critic has both to try to see the object as if for the first time, without the direction of the criticism which has intervened; and also, as I have said, previous criticism is itself a part of the object of his criticism. Hence the critic's problem becomes for every generation more complicated ; but also, every generation has a better opportunity for realising how complicated the problem is. At one time, the critical task may be the elaboration of a kind of criticism already initiated ; at another, its refutation ; at another, the introduction of a new theory. that is to say, the exposition of an aspect hitherto overlooked; or again, it may be to combine and to display the pattern afforded by diverse voices. And in this Shakespeare pattern every laudatory must find a place, when it is a true praise not previously sounded; and everything derogatory too, even when blunted by misunderstanding, so long as it evinces the temper of an age of a people, and not merely a personal whim."

Shakespearean criticism can be divided into three phases—the contemporary criticism, the criticism from Dryden to Coleridge, and that from Coleridge to the present day. Shakespeare's contemporaries underestimated his accomplishment, and were blind to his genius, but they cannot be blamed for it because greatness in a sense is the result of time. Giving an account of contemporary criticism of Shakespeare, Kenneth Muir, in his essay on "Changing Interpretations of Shakespeare" writes: "His real greatness was apparently not suspected in his own lifetime. The first criticism of his work is to be found in Greene's *Groatsworth of Wit* 1592, where he is attacked as an upstart crow beautified with the feathers of the University wits....But during his lifetime, there were many tributes paid to the sweetness of his versification.....Gabriel

Harvey, a Cambridge don, tells us that 'the younger sort' delighted in *Venus and Adonis*, though he admits that *Lucrece* and *Hamlet* 'have in them to please the wiser sort.' Shakespeare had 'small Latin and less Greek', and the very fact that he was the most popular dramatist of his time made the academic critics cautious and suspicious. Even his fellow dramatists lamented his lack of learning. Beaumont, writing to Jonson and probably echoing his correspondent's views, said that Shakespeare's best lines would be used by future critics to show

> How far sometimes a mortal man may go
> By the dim light of Nature.

Jonson himself complained of Shakespeare's bombast and lack of art; and when the players praised Shakespeare because 'he never blotted out a line' Jonson retorted, 'would he had blotted a thousand." By 1630, Jonson who was a learned man and a careful craftsman, had become irritated by the idolatrous admiration which was already being accorded to Shakespeare:

> I loved the man, and do honour his memory
> (On this side of Idolatry) as much as any.

Yet Jonson himself was partly responsible for his idolatry. The elegy he contributed to the First Folio (1623) is perhaps the most magnificent tribute ever paid by one poet to another, for it not only ranks Shakespeare above Chaucer and Spenser, but above all the Greek and Roman dramatists. Not only was he the 'soul of the age' but 'for all time'; not only 'the wonder of our stage', but also the 'star of poets'. Most remarkable, in view of Jonson's remark elsewhere, is his praise of Shakespeare as an artist:

> Yet must I not give Nature all : Thy Art,
> My gentle Shakespeare, must enjoy a part.
> For though the poet's matter Nature be,
> His art doth give the fashion. And that he
> Who casts to write a living line, must sweat,
> (Such as thine are) and strike a second heat
> Upon the Muse's anvil ; turn the same,
> (And himself with it) that he thinks to frame ;
> Or for the laurel he may gain a scorn.
> For a good poet's made, as well as born.
> And such wert thou. Look how the father's face
> Lives in his issue, even so, the race
> Of Shakespeare's mind and manners brightly shines
> In his well turned and true field lines :

In each of which he seems to shake a lance,
And brandish'd at the eyes of ignorance.

The difference between the attitude displayed in this poem and Jonson's other recorded views on Shakespeare may partly be explained by the fact that it was a public commendation, whereas his other remarks were spoken in casual conversation or written as a counterblast to what he regarded as excessive praise. Perhaps he had not realised, until he read the plays collected for the First Folio, just how good they were."

The second phase of Shakespeare Criticism starts from Dryden. During the whole of the seventeenth century, critics contrasted Shakespeare's natural gifts, with Jonson's art. Milton praised Shakespeare's 'native wood-notes wild' in his poem *L'Allegro*, but there was no written criticism of importance until after the Restoration, when the plays of Shakespeare were adapted by Dryden and Shadwell, and Tate, in order to conform to the popular taste. Most of the critics of Dryden's age found faults with his plays and attributed them to the barbarism of the Elizabethan age. Though Dryden, to a certain extent, shared the fashionable views and had the audacity of improving upon Shakespeare's plays, he rose above other critics on account of his whole-hearted admiration for Shakespeare's poetic genius and for his power of creating characters.

Dealing with Shakespeare criticism by Dryden and his contemporaries, Muir writes: "Dryden may seem to a modern reader to be mistaken in his conviction that the wit, language, conversation, and taste of his own age was superior to those of the age of Elizabeth (*The Dramatic Poetry of the Last Age*, 1672). It may seem strange that the author of heroic plays should complain of Shakespeare's bombast, though it was natural for one who paid due respect to the 'rules' to criticise Shakespeare's plots. But when he speaks not for his age but from his heart, Dryden's admiration is not lacking in warmth:

'He was the man who of all modern, and perhaps ancient poets, had the largest and most comprehensive soul. All the images of nature were still present to him, and he drew them not laboriously, but luckily ; when he describes anything, you more than see it, you feel it too. Those who accuse him to have wanted learning give him the greatest commendation: he was naturally learned ; he needed not the spectacle of books to read nature ; he looked inwards, and found her there. I cannot say he is everywhere alike ; were he so, I should do him injury to compare him with the greatest of mankind. He

> is many times flat, insipid; his comic wit degenerating into clenches, his serious swelling into bombast. But he is always great, when some great occasion is presented to him.' ('Of Dramatic Poesy').

Thomas Rymer had learning, common sense, and a coarse vein of wit, but he seems to have been entirely without aesthetic perception. His *Short View of .Tragedy* (1692) contains some famous denunciation of *Othello* as 'a bloody farce, without salt or savour'. Iago is badly drawn because soldiers are 'open-hearted, frank, plain-dealing', and plays should deal with the normal rather with the exceptional. Desdemona's marriage with Othello is incredible. The language of the play is often gross and inflated. Finally Rymer pokes fun at the moral of the play:

> 'First, this may be a caution to all maidens of quality how, without their parents' consent they run away with black-moors—Secondly, this may be a warning to all good wives, that they look well to their linen. Thirdly, this may be lesson to husbands, that before their jealousy be tragical, the proof may be mathematical.'

Rymer's criticism was more hostile than that of any other of his contemporaries, but even Dryden showed respect for his views; Rowe admitted the justice of his criticism, though suggesting that he ought also to have pointed out the beauties as well as the faults; Dennis lamented Shakespeare's neglect of poetic justice and his ignorance of the Classics, though he admitted that Rymer might by the same methods have revealed faults even in Walter; and Pope said that Rymer was, on the whole, one of the best critics we ever had."

Referring to Shakespeare criticism during the eighteenth century, Muir writes: "The weighing of the faults and beauties was the favourite of exercise of eighteenth century critics. We find it in the prefaces of the editors—Rowe, Pope, Theobald, and Johnson. Pope's preface is largely in the tradition of the previous century. Shakespeare is not so much an imitator, as an instrument of Nature; and ''tis not so just to say that he speaks from her, as she speaks through him.' He argues that Shakespeare's faults were largely due to the bad taste of his audience and to the fact that he was an actor. One of Pope's remarks has been offered as evidence of his breadth of outlook: 'To judge therefore Shakespeare by Aristotle's rules, is like trying a man by the laws of one country, who had acted under those of an other.'"

"Theobald, the first editor (1734) with an adequate knowledge of Elizabethan literature was the first to show that Shakespeare's anachronisms were not due to ignorance or the corruption of his texts, but to the 'too powerful blaze of his imagination which, when once raised, made all acquired knowledge vanish and disappear before it.' "

Johnson's great preface is in some ways the culmination of the Shakespearean criticism of the previous hundred years. Referring to Johnson as the critic of Shakespeare, T. S. Eliot writes: "To pass from Dryden to Johnson is to make the journey from one oasis to another. After the critical essays of Dryden, the preface to Shakespeare by Samuel Johnson is the next great piece of criticism to read. One would willingly resign the honour of an Abbey burial for the greater honour of words like the following from a man of the greatness of their author:

> "The poet, of whose works I have undertaken the revision may now begin to assume the dignity of an ancient, and claim the privilege of established fame and prescriptive veneration. He had long out-lived his century, the term commonly fixed as the test of literary merit.... His works are read without any other reason than the desire of pleasure, and are therefore praised only as pleasure is obtained : yet, thus unassisted by interest of passion, they have passed through variations of taste and changes of manners, and, as they devolved from one generation to another have received new honours at every transmission.'

Though Johnson, like other eighteenth century critics tended to summarise the faults and beauties of Shakespeare, yet he took an independent line on these points. He defended Shakespeare's mingling of tragedy and comedy and his neglect of the three unities and praised him for his intrinsic merit. Moreover, in the course of his comments on plays, his remarks on Falstaff and Polonius served as a beginning of that analysis of character which formed the staple of Romantic criticism.

"The last thirty years of the eighteenth century saw a reaction against the neo-classical attitude to Shakespeare in full swing. He was defended for ignoring the unities, and a greater interest was evinced in characterisation. Thomas Whately, William Richardson and Maurice Morgann started the tradition of analysing the characters in isolation. In 1794, there appeared Walter Whither's book, *Specimen of a Com-*

mentary, the first book in which Shakespeare's imagery was systematically studied.

"This phase of Shakespeare criticism was greatly influenced by German critics like Lessing, Schlegel and Goethe. They concentrated their attention chiefly upon the philosophic significance of character, and penetrated to a deeper level than that of the simple, moral values attributed to great literature by earlier times. Moreover, they recognised an element of mystry in Shakespeare, which was one of the great gifts of the Romantic Movement to Shakespeare criticism".

All the Romantic critics had something to say about Shakespeare. Landor made some interesting comments in *Imaginary Conversations*; De Quincy's *Knocking on the Gate in Macbeth* is perhaps the best known as a single piece of criticism of Shakespeare that has been written. Lamb also made his contributions to it, and Keats' remarks in his letters justify his belief that he understood Shakespeare to his depths. But Coleridge and Hazlitt made some lasting contributions to Shakespeare criticism.

Muir referring to the contributions made by Coleridge and Hazlitt to Shakespearean criticism, writes: "Coleridge's greatest contribution is his continual insistence that every work of art must be judged by its own organic laws. If this sometimes led to explain away Shakespeare's faults or to ascribe them to another hand, it also led him to recognise qualities which earlier critics had missed. He has brilliant notes on individual passages and profound comments on the poetry; but he specialises in analysis of character, as certain eighteenth-century critics had done before him, and it is this side of his work which sets the tone for most nineteenth century criticism. Indeed Bradley's *Shakespearean Tragedy* (1904) belongs essentially to the Coleridge tradition. The account of Hamlet's character given by Coleridge is a good sketch of the critic's own, as he half-realised—'I have a smack of Hamlet myself, if I may say so'. But the over-intellectualism he diagnosed formed the basis of Bradley's conception of the character. Here, as in several other places, Coleridge was romanticizing Shakespeare, reading into the plays his own prepossessions; and though he himself understood the plays as poetic dramas, his method of abstracting the characters could be used by later critics who were without such understanding. It may also be said that he did not keep his admiration 'this side of idolatry', and he lost sight of the face that the plays were written to be performed.

"Hazlitt, the best of dramatic critics, was less in danger of forgetting that Shakespeare was a playwright; and in spite of the title of his book, *Characters of Shakespeare's Plays*, he was less concerned with characterisation than Coleridge had been. Occasionally Hazlitt allows political opinions to distort his judgement, as in his remarks on *Henry V* and *Coriolanus*; he is often too content with a sort of running commentary of the plays under discussion; and he owes a great deal to Coleridge and something to Lamb. He has many true remarks, but they are the kind of remark which might be made by an ordinary intelligent reader. Yet, with all his faults, Hazlitt gives us a fuller and more satisfactory account of Shakespeare's plays than any previous critic; and at his best (*e.g.*, on *Macbeth* and *Twelfth Night*) he is admirable."

Emphasizing Coleridge's importance in the history of Shakespearean criticism, T. S. Eliot has remarked: "Coleridge perhaps is the greatest single figure in Shakespeare criticism down to the present day. The romantic critics—Hazlitt, Lamb, De Quincy—do but make a constellation about the primary star of Coleridge. Their work is chiefly important as reinforcing the influence of Coleridge."

The history of Shakespearean criticism from Coleridge up to modern times is very interesting. Referring to the general trend of criticism during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, Issac has observed in his essay on "Shakespeare Criticism from Coleridge to the present day": "The eighteenth century was the age of Shakespeare idolatry, with Garrick's Shakespeare Jubilee, and Daniel Wemb's typical remark in 1762: 'the most extraordinary genius, that our country, or, perhaps, any other has produced'. The later history of Shakespeare criticism is a reflection of the history of human thought in each country on which he has impinged. The growth of romanticism swept Shakespeare forward as unwitting leader in the campaign against Cartesian mechanism. In Germany, Russia and France he became part of the movement. Herder and Goethe in Germany, Pushkin and Bielinski in Russia, Stendhal and Hugo in France, all bear critical testimony to the progress of the romantic movement under his banner. In Germany and Russia the period of the romantic movement is the 'Hamlet period', in which the character of the Shakespearean figure becomes a mirror and symbol of the national growing pains. The pre-Romantic legacy, with Maurice Morgann, William Richardson

and Thomas Whately, was an overwhelming belief in Shakespeare's power as a creator of living and plausible characters. The romantic legacy with Coleridge, Hazlitt and Schlegel, was an insistence on Shakespeare as a creative and original genius whose contribution was to be measured and traced. Kantian, Schlegelian and other currents induced a philosophic tendency towards unity in conception and interpretation. Wordsworth, as early as 1815, acknowledged, to Coleridge's annoyance, the German superiority in recognising that 'the judgment of Shakespeare in the selection of his materials, and in the manner in which he has made them, heterogeneous as they often are, constitute a unity of their own, and contribute all to one great end, is not less admirable than his imagination, his invention, and his intuitive knowledge of human nature.'

"Once the chronology of the plays had been established, the task of tracing Shakespeare's growth of maturity his summits of achievement, and in general the pattern of his creative career, was facilitated. The task was attempted simultaneously in England and Germany, but reached special heights under the impulse of the unifying philosophical approach. In England, William Spalding, Charles Knight and Henry Hallam, and in Germany Hermann Ulrici and G. G. Gervinus, were the chief builders of a Shakespeare whose pattern of growth could be traced in well-marked successive periods. In David Masson, in 1865, we get the first glimpses of the sentimental 'final mood of reconciliation' theory. Dowden's *Shakespeare: His Mind and Art* 1875) is the first book in English to give anything like a unified and rounded picture of the whole achievement of the dramatist....Dowden and Furnivall went all out on the 'dour period' doctrine, and though their sentimentality and their belief in Shakespeare's doctrine of female sweetness and purity soon earned the label of gush from more sober critics, it is this sentimental picture which still too largely holds the field in orthodox circles."

Ten years after Dowden appeared Moulton's 'scientific' study of *Shakespeare as a Dramatic Artist* (1885), in which he attempted to build up a theory of drama from Shakespeare's practice; but his formulations were too rigid and logical and too little concerned with poetic texture. Moreover he projected into the poet's works his own moral prepossessions. This direction was later followed by G. P. Baker, and, with a difference, by Quiller-Couch. The best Victorian criticism of

Shakespeare is to be found in Pater's essay's on *Measure for Measure,* and the English histories, and his influence can be traced in Yeats' *Ideas of Good and Evil.*

In the nineteenth century and in part of the twentieth century, the critics were occupied with building up of a picture of Shakespeare's personality, and they looked upon him as an amateur philosopher's plaything. In their different ways Dowden, Brades, Frank Harris, and even James Joyce in the brilliant debate in *Ulysses* have attempted this task. The chief monument of this tendency lies in A. G. Bradley's *Shakespearean Tragedy* (1904), which according to Issac is 'a magnificent, influential and dangerously side tracking study."

Giving an estimate of Bradley's *Shakespearean Tragedy;* Muir has remarked: "Bradley's *Shakespearean Tragedy* was the culmination of nineteenth century criticism, and it is still an impressive book. He attempted to analyse each play as though he were an actor studying all the parts, not as a producer to whom the characters are creations subordinated to a poetic conception and existing only in relation to that conception and to each other. He was aware that the psychological point of view is not the same as the tragic, but he concentrated on the characters and has little to say about other things after his opening chapter. He ignored the conditions and conventions of the Elizabethan stage and complained of 'faults' which were no more than legitimate conventions of poetic drama. He had no love for the stage of his own time, even though his ideal performance only required perfect acting and production on such a stage. He wrote of the characters as though they were people in real life rather than as poetic creations and he thought it necessary to explain away any inconsistencies in them. In spite of these limitations, and in spite of attempts by later critics to stress the self-deception of Othello, the 'immaturity' of Hamlet, the evil of Macbeth, the corruption of Falstaff and the jealousy of Iago, Bradley's conception of the characters is still an orthodoxy to be questioned. His book is a great monument to the closet Shakespeare."

Referring to the history of Shakespearean criticism after Bradley, Issac writes, "With the waning of philosophic idealism, the new realism, though not always the new science, treated matters differently. The new science was seen in Dr. Ernest Jones's *The OEdipus-complex as an explanation of Hamlet's mystery* (1910). This is the last flicker of the new Richardsonian

method, but employs all the subtleties of the new Freudian technique of psycho-analysis. Apart from the initial fallacy, which is Morgann's fallacy, the justification of the method lies in its attempts to add to our information concerning Shakespeare's choice of material and his adventures among motives. The new realism turned to less subtle and less debatable sources for dealing with character. G. A. Biebar under the influence of Schucking, discussed the 'melancholy type', as it pervaded Elizabethan society, for light on Hamlet, and Lily B. Camsbell explored the physiological psychology of the age in order to establish Shakespeare's automatic equipment for dealing with character. E. E. Stoll, the most powerful and illuminating of the American school of realists and L. L. Schucking, the penetrating author of *Character Problems in Shakespeare's Plays*, have both turned to the evidence of the plays and above all of contemporary dramatic conventions for their proofs. They have established the fact that soliloquies are to be taken at face value, the statements made by one character about another are to be believed, that Elizabethan ghosts were real to the audience and with a score of similar positions have overturned the whole system of romantic character study. The new realism has tried to isolate and display, not the Romantic Shakespeare, not the Victorian Shakespeare, but the Elizabethan Shakespeare. The present tendency of Shakespeare criticism is to face the author squarely rather than dodge him by excursion into philosophy, history or ethics. One of the great pioneers of this approach, and one of the most balanced of worshippers, was Sir W. Raleigh who in his 1907 study boldly spoke of the brothel scene in *Pericles*, 'which no pen but his could have written', 'and speaking of *Measure for Measure* as Shakespeare's nearest approach to direct presentation of a moral problem, concluded that there was no single character through whose eyes we can see the question and situation as Shakespeare saw them. The new realism also owes much to the diverse shock-tactics of T. S. Eliot, and of Bernard Shaw. Valuable work is being done by H. D. Charlton in viewing Shakespeare's early plays in the light of Renaissance critical conceptions of drama and the European picture of romance in Elizabethan times. A pertinent approach, and one likely to endure by its relevance, is the transference of investigation from the study to the theatrical laboratory by H. Granville-Barker.

"The study of Shakespeare's poetry is at last coming into its own, and firm materials for criticism, though only materials

as yet, are being assembled by such students of imagery as Edmund Blunden, Gearge Rylends, Elizabeth Holmes and Caroline Spurgeon. It is a strange commentary on the history of Shakespeare criticism that during 300 years no serious study, and, apart from Coleridge's brilliant asides, no serious attempt even at a study of Shakespeare's poetical processes has been made."

The most important of modern critics on Shakespeare is Wilson Knight. Giving an estimate of his work, Muir writes: "Wilson Knight's first important book, *The Wheel of Fire*, was published in 1928; and it was followed by *The Imperial Theme* (1931), *The Shakespearean Tempest* (1932), and *The Crown of Life* (1947). He is primarily concerned with the analysis of poetic symbolism, the interpretation of the plays in relation to each other and what he calls the Shakespearean progress and the subordination of character to the poetic meaning of the play. He is more concerned with the pattern of each play than with the chronological sequence of events. He considers the themes spatially rather than temporally; he deals, for example, with the opposition of life and death forces in *Macbeth*, such things as sleep feasting on the one hand, and the more commonly recognised manifestations of evil on the other. Yet Knight defined his aim in 1928 as 'the application to Shakespeare's work in general of the methods already applied by Bradley to certain outstanding plays'. As a matter of fact, twelve of Knight's essays deal with plays already discussed by Bradley; and though he also deals with the Roman plays, the problem comedies, *Timon of Athens*, and the romances, his methods bear little resemblance to Bradley's. Stoll and others have complained that Knight's interpretations are alien to the Elizabethan spirit; but although this may be so, Elizabethan criticism was much less mature than its poetry, and we cannot circumscribe the interpretation of great art by the understanding of the age in which it was produced. Knight has widened our understanding of the plays, even though it must be admitted that his work is uneven, and that every reader will have many points of disagreement, for example with his criticism of Isabella, or the high opinion he has of *Henry VIII*. In general it may be felt that Knight's judgment is liable to be disturbed by patriotism and by Nietszchean views of evil."

Concluding his essay "Changing Interpretations of Shakespeare", Muir writes: "Knight adds something to Bradley, but Bradley has still to be read; Bradley is based on Coleridge and

Hazlitt; but we get something from Coleridge not to be found in Bradley; after Romantic excesses we can return to Johnson and Dryden with renewed pleasure; and there are times when we may be tempted to think that Ben Jonson's elegy is the best thing that has been written about Shakespeare.....In two respects, indeed, the moderns have an advantage. They base their work on a more elaborate knowledge of Elizabethan drama and its background, and they unconsciously find in Shakespeare what the present age requires. In spite of the obvious danger of finding what is not there, this can be a legitimate activity....It is significant that the age which was most critical of his 'faults (1660-1800) was the one when most liberties were taken with the staging of his plays. The romantic critics and their eighteenth century forerunners, by their insistence that Shakespeare must be judged by his own laws, prepared the way for less distorted stage versions of his plays, and the increased knowledge of Elizabethan conventions in the nineteenth century led naturally to a partial return to Elizabethan methods of staging. Now actors and producers study the critics, and there is less divorce between the reader's Shakespeare and the player's Shakespeare than at any time since the seventeenth century."

15. THE TEXTUAL PROBLEM OF SHAKESPEARE'S PLAYS.

There has been a lot of controversy about the authenticity of Shakespeare's plays since they were first published, though now on account of the research of some scholars, it seems to be settling down. C. H. Herford has, in his book, *Recent Shakespearean Investigations*, discussed all the aspects of this controversy. There he has observed: "The plays and poems have come down to us, as is well known, in one, or both, of two forms, the 'Quartos' and the 'Folios'. Quarto editions of about half the plays appeared during the course of Shakespeare's active career and later. Several of them are grossly imperfect, and were probably issued by 'pirates', without the authority and against the will of Company and author. The case of the rest has been prejudiced by this fact. The First Folio, on the other hand, was issued by two of his fellow-actors, professedly with every kind of loyal care, but seven years after his death. Nineteenth century criticism stood, on the whole, for the Folio as the most authoritative text. But some of its deficiencies were obvious, even glaring. English critics who rejected, as they became during the century more and more disposed to reject, Shakespeare's author-

ship, wholly or in part, of *Titus Andronicus, Henry VIII, I Hen. VI, Timon of Athens, Taming of the Shrew*, could not allow any unquestioned authority to the Folio which included them all, or any respect to the claim of its editors to have used everywhere their author's MS. It was certain in any case that many undoubtedly authentic passages were omitted in the Folio and retained in the Quartos.

"The principal feature of Shakespearean bibliographical criticism during the twentieth century has been to invert this relation, and restore the highest authority, so far as they are available and are not pirated, to the Quartos. The leader in this changed direction is A. W. Pollard, and his conclusions have been applied and extended by Dover Wilson in the *New Shakespeare*.

"Pollard began by setting aside the group of confessedly imperfect and unauthorised texts, which he called the 'bad' Quartos: *Romeo and Juliet* (1597), the *Merry Wives, Henry V, Hamlet* (1603), and *Pericles*. The remainder, fourteen in number, he distinguished as the 'good' Quartos, claiming for them on the whole an authority superior to that of the Folio. They were, in the first place, with two exceptions, authorised by the Company of Players, and therefore printed directly from versions of the plays in their possession. Further, Pollard contends that these versions are likely to have been not transcripts made for the purpose, at much cost of time and money but the prompt-copy actually used in the theatre, which itself was substantially the autograph of the author. His reasoning is contained in a series of books from 1909 onwards, especially in his now almost classical account of *Shakespeare's Fight with the Pirates* (1917). It is shown, for instance, that the printed Quartos often give us the prompter's note made on the prompt-copy and accidentally not excised. It is evident, too, that in many cases the play was submitted to a censor in the author's autograph copy, which then, with his excisions or alterations, became the prompt-copy. There were reasons for this frugality, apart from the cost of making duplicates; for the risk of piratic publication was much reduced if the play existed only in a single, closely-guarded, manuscript, which was used for all purposes, censorship, performance and finally—untidy, blotched, annotated, but authentic—for the press.

"It will be seen that the importance of this conclusion is very great since it brings, through large tracts of a play, save for the interposition of a single person—the compositor—face to

face with Shakespeare's written text. It is true, before serving as prompt-copy, the author's manuscript was liable to 'cuts', abridgments, re-arrangements to fit it for different circumstances or occasions. But these, in Shakespeare's case, are mostly not beyond the reach of detection by competent criticism; and their existence does not reduce the importance of conclusion that we have proximate access to Shakespeare's actual writing.

The 'bad' Quartos, in spite of the epithet, have also an extraordinary interest, since the problem of their origin admits of no simple solution. It is now generally admitted that we have in these cases, to do with (1) abridgments of the original, full-length play, effected in the theatre; these abridgments having been there, (2) partially revised by Shakespeare, as when 'Corabis' was renamed Polonius, (3) piratically printed by the mediation of some actor who sold his professional knowledge of the text, and particularly his own part, to the pirates, is the villain of the bad-quarto-drama, new style.

"The same considerations which raised the authority of the better class of Quartos disclosed further deficiencies in the Folio, or threw these already recognised into more salient relief. Not only were the claims of the editors to have printed uniformly from Shakespeare's MSS. clearly untenable; their edition was shown to be a compilation of texts of varying character and origin, handled on no uniform system, while their most definite attempt at uniformity—the division into acts and scenes—is widely suspected to have been contrary to Shakespeare's own practice. For about half the plays no contemporary Quarto, good or bad, was in existence, and the editors were thus relegated to a prompt copy which had been undergoing all vicissitudes of the green-room for a dozen years since its author's retirement from the stage, and seven years since his death, or which was even lost altogether, and had to be clumsily replaced by the separate actor's parts, put together as best they might. The division into acts and scenes, found in all but six of the Folio plays, seems to have been regularly adopted by the King's Man after Shakespeare left them. It is found in none of the Quartos printed in his lifetime, the latest of which is *Troilus and Cressida* (1609). That this important structural principle, supported by classical and Italian drama and rapidly becoming current on the contemporary stage, was rejected by Shakespeare, may not be sufficiently proved; but it has been shown that the Folio division between acts sometimes breaks us a continuous scene."

16. SHAKESPEARE'S CHARACTERISATIONS.

The supreme excellence of Shakespeare as a dramatist lies in his power of characterisation. Referring to this quality of Shakespeare's art, Ward has remarked in his book, *A History of English Dramatic Literature*, Vol. II: "It was neither in diction and versification, nor in construction and the aids to construction, that the progress of the English drama incurred its deepest debt to Shakespeare. The charm with which the magic of his language and verse invested his plays may to this day be more generally felt than any other quality which they possess; and to his enterprise and skill in choosing and disposing of his materials, his dramatic productions may continue to owe their more immediate popularity on the stage. But that which has given the greatest and most enduring potency to his influence upon our national drama, and in ever-widening circles upon the modern Western drama in general, is his own supreme gift as a dramatist—the power of characterisation. In the drawing of characters ranging over almost every type of humanity, in which the experience of succeeding generations has recognised a fit subject for the art of either the tragic or the comic dramatist, he infinitely surpassed all his predecessors and remains absolutely without a peer and it was in this direction that he pointed the way which the English drama could henceforth not desert except by becoming untrue to itself."

The greatest among the critics have, as is right and fitting, dwelt with the utmost insistence and amplitude upon this quality of his dramatic genius. Hazlitt, who was among those who recognised Shakespeare's power of characterisation as his greatest excellence as a dramatic artist, observed in his book, *The Characters of Shakespeare*: "Each of his characters is as much as itself, and as absolutely independent of the rest, as well as of the author, as if they were living persons, not fictions of the mind. The poet may be said, for the time, to identify himself with the character he wishes to represent, and to pass from one to another, like the same soul successively animating different bodies. By an art like that of the ventriloquist, he throws his imagination out of himself, and makes every word appear to proceed from the mouth of the person in whose name it is given. His plays alone are properly expressions of the passions, not descriptions of them. His characters are real beings of flesh and blood; they speak like men, not like authors.

"Chaucer's characters are sufficiently distinct from one

another, but they are too little varied in themselves, too much like identical propositions. They are consistent, but uniform; we get no new idea of them from first to last; they are not placed in different light nor are their subordinate *traits* brought out in new situations; they are like portraits or physiognomical studies, with the distinguishing features marked with inconceivable truth and precision, but they preserve the same unaltered air and attitude. Shakespeare's are historical figures, equally true and correct, but put into action, where every nerve and muscle is displayed in the struggle with others, with all the effect of collision and contrast, with every variety of light and shade. Chaucer's characters are narrative, Shakespeare's dramatic, Milton's epic. That is, Chaucer told only as much of history as he pleased, as was required for a particular purpose. He answered for his characters himself. In Shakespeare they are introduced upon the stage, are liable to be asked all sorts of questions, and are forced to answer for themselves. In Chaucer we, perceive a fixed essence of character. In Shakespeare there is a continual composition and decomposition of its elements, a fermentation of every particle in the whole mass, by its alternate affinity or antipathy to other principles which are brought in contact with it. Till the experiment is tried, we do not know the result, the turn which the character will take in its new circumstances. Milton took only a few principles, and refined them from every base alloy. His imagination, 'high sphered in Heaven', claimed kindred only with what he saw from that height, and could raise to the same elevation with itself. He sat retired and kept his state alone, 'playing with wisdom'; while Shakespeare mingled with the crowd, and played the host, 'to make society the sweeter welcome'.

"When he conceived of character whether real or imaginary, he not only entered into all its thoughts and feelings, but seemed instantly, and as if by touching a secret spring, to be surrounded with all the same objects, 'subject of the same skyey influence', the same local, outward and unforeseen accidents which would occur in reality. Thus the character of Caliban not only stands before us with a language and manners of its own, but the scenery and situation of the enchanted island he inhabits, the traditions of the place, its strange noises, its hidden recesses, 'his frequent haunts and ancient neighbourhood', are given with a miraculous truth of nature, and with all the familiarity of an older collection. The whole 'coheres semblably together' in time, place, and circumstance. In reading

this author, you do not merely learn what his characters say,—you see their persons. By something expressed or understood, you are at no loss to decypher their peculiar physiognomy, the meaning of a look, the grouping, the bye-play, as we might see it on the stage. A word, an epithet paints a whole scene, or throws us back whole year in the history of the person represented.....How well the silent anguish of Macduff is conveyed to the reader, by the friendly expostulation of Malcolm—'What! man; ne'er pull your hat upon your brows!'"

Comparing Shakespeare's characters with those of Marlowe and Ben Jonson, Reese has observed: "Shakespeare was not interested in the man in whom the balance was entirely overthrown. Jonson was the chief among the dramatists who liked to examine the character who pursues a course of rational calculation, the man whose defects do not spring from an excess of passion but from an excess of reason. Iago was such a man. In them the will is strong, and it allows them to subdue the passions which might distract them from their chosen purpose; but the reason is warped, and the goal—usually acquisition of some kind or other—becomes so insistently important that all impulses are killed which do not lead to it. Such are the bloodless caricatures whom Jonson liked to call 'humours', and they were more at home in satirical comedy than in tragedy. Jacobean tragedy occupied itself rather with Marlowe's heritage of the high-aspiring creatures of passion, in whom reason was inadequate either to restrain the upward drive of will or to teach them what to do with their conquests when they had achieved them. Mortimer's life became empty when he found himself with 'no place to mount': Shakespeare examined such a person in Richard III and found in him nothing worthy of future study. But in the hands of some of his contemporaries passion was its own excuse, and a significant change came over the drama when it espoused blood against judgment and set its heroes above the moral law....Shakespeare regarded these ungoverned passions as calamitous. Macbeth's fate was appropriate for all who would declare that

For mine own good,
All causes shall give way.

Mac III iv 135.

Nature always seeks a balance, and the admirable man is he in whom blood and judgment are finely comingled: not the calculating, possionless man, for that 'fitteth the spirit of a

tapster', nor he whose obsessive desires betray him to unkindness, but the man who is 'open and free': magnanimous, that is, temperate, brave and loving. Such men are rare, and the best of them may fall to their ruin if they are perplex'd in the extreme. The pathos of Shakespeare's tragedy does not come from the downfall of wicked men whose fate is seldom interesting, but from the suffering of man betrayed to evil by that in them which is potentially noble.'

In presenting his characters Shakespeare is highly tolerant; he does not take sides, and pronounces no judgment. In the quality of tolerance he excels all other authors. In this connection Saintsbury writes in *The Cambridge History of English Literature*, Vol. V: "Shakespeare's severity is tempered by, and throws into relief, the quality of tolerance in which he excels every other author. This tolerance is not complaisance: justice prevents that, and sanity too. Shakespeare never winks at anything. But as he understands everything, so, without exactly pardoning, it he invariably adopts a strictly impartial attitude towards everything and everybody. In this, he stands in marked contrast to Dante, who, with almost equal sanity and fully equal justice, is not merely unnecessarily inexonerable but distinctly partisan—not merely a hanging judge, but a hanging judge doubled with an unsparing public prosecutor. It might be said that the extraordinary serenity and clarity of Shakespeare's mind and temper make it unnecessary for him to think whether he is fair or not. He gives the character as it is—the other characters and the reader may make what they can of it. He allows Malcolm to call Macbeth a 'dead butcher' and Iady Macbeth a 'fiendish queen', because it is what Malcolm would have done. But he does not attach these tickets to them; and you will accept the said tickets at your own risk. Another contrast which is useful is, again, that of Thackeray. The author of *Vanity Fair* and *The Newcomes* has a power of vivifying character not much inferior to Shakespeare's. But, when he was vivified his characters, he descends too much into the same arena with them; and he likes or dislikes them, as one likes or dislikes fellow creatures, not as the creator should be affected towards creations. Becky Sharp is a very fallible human creature, and Barnes Newcome is a detestable person. But Thackeray is hard on Becky; and, though he tries not to be hard on Barnes, he is. Shakespeare is never hard on any of his characters—not merely in the case of Lady Macbeth and Cleopatra, where there is no difficulty; but in those of Iago

and Edmund, of Richard and of John, where there is. The difficulty does not exist for him. And yet he has no sneaking kindness for the bad, great person, as Milton has. The potter has made the pot as the pot ought to be and could not but be; he does but think it necessary to label it 'caution' or 'this is a bad pot', much less to kick it into potsherds. If it breaks itself, it must; in the shreds into which it breaks itself, in those it will lie; and 'there is no more to seyn.'"

Different critics have tried to interpret the characters of Shakespeare in their own way. In fact the interpretation of the characters of Shakespeare has had a history, with fluctuations, revolutions, and reactions, not determined solely by the genius or authority of particular interpreters, but reflecting general intellectual tendencies of the time. From Coleridge to Dowden this interpretation was dominated by the intellectual bias which explained kind of phenomena more readily by reason and purpose than by blind impulse and accidents, which therefore found meaning and significance everywhere, and in particular discovered in the speech, demeanour, and fortune of every Shakespeare's character the working out of a single and coherent dramatic intention. Bradley has also, to a great extent, followed the same method. But in 1900, a pronounced reaction against this type of interpretation became apparent Bergson had dethroned intelligence as the master faculty in man in favour of the instinctive intuition which he shares with the animal world. The prevailing psychology, from James and Wundt and M'Dougall, was preoccupied with those aspects of mentality which depend most closely upon the sense-stimuli, upon the half-unconscious and involuntary activities of instinct and habit, or upon determining or modifying social and physical conditions. It was believed that a man may be inconsistent or incoherent, he may have conflicting even contradictory moods, and yet remain indefeasible himself. Moreover, the seeming inconsistencies of an imagined character may merely betray the artist's fluctuating intention, or uncertain hand, or the capricious accesses and lulls of inspiration.

"Modern psychology, by its disclosure of the phenomena of dual and multiple personality, has eased the path of those who find real inconsistency in any part of Shakespeare's characters; their inconsistency need not detract from their psychological truth. This is the standpoint of Prof. Wright who recognises with perfect clearness that our sense of a man's 'reality' not merely depends upon our being able to reduce him

to a formula, but is even heightened and quickened when we find our efforts to do so futile. And Shakespeare's persons impress us as 'real' for the same reason. Referring to the character of Hamlet, he remarks :

"No critic has made one perfectly comprehensible man out of Hamlet. And yet there is no question of his reality—no one denies it—there is only a question whether we can grasp him as an entity, whether we can put him in a definition. We know Hamlet in much the same way as we know our friend, in spite of the fact that we know him this way partly *because* we cannot explain him."

On the other hand, the modern realist of the more mechanical type lays hands upon every appearance of inconsistency in the character as a sign of incongruity or incoherence in the art. Prof. Stoll and Schucking are the leaders of such type of critics. "What is to be made of this heap of contradictions!" exclaims Prof. Stoll after a summary of the demeanour of Othello.

There is also the 'historical' method of interpretation of character, which finds the key to the Shakespeare's characterisation in the tastes, interests, and preoccupations of his audience. This method has been pursued with much labour and scholarship, Miss Winstanley in her book, *Hamlet and the Scottish Succession* (1921).

But it is impossible to interpret Shakespeare's characters by any definite method, because they are the product of the poetic exploration of the hidden springs of human conduct. In this connection, Reese has remarked: "Shakespeare does not ask us to be content with one-dimensional sketches drawn after the arbitrary and transient standards of a particular culture, and he would not have us believe that men always behave in ways that even they themselves can predict. He presents man in all his splendid contradictions, 'in doubt to deem himself a god, or beast,' refusing to be strait-jacketed into consistency, intermittently obedient to the promptings of a deeper, unknown self, but finally invincible. It is little wonder that for thousands of his readers the contemplation of men in action has been the supreme reward that the study of Shakespeare has to offer. But others are drawn into his imagined worlds by the potency of the emotional response he stirs in them; and others, again, because they feel they have been invited to participate in art of judgement. Our common experience of Shakespeare is too

various to submit to definition. But always it is poetry which conditions that experience."

Shakespeare is particularly happy in drawing female characters and his women are far superior to his men. In this connection Raleigh has observed: "Shakespeare's characters of women as they are drawn even in his earliest plays, take us into a world unknown to his master Marlowe, with whom women are prizes or dreams. The many excellent essays that have been written on this topic make too much, perhaps, of individual differences among the heroines of the Comedies. Rosalind, Portia, Beatrice, Viola, are at least as remarkable for their similarities as for their differences. The hesitancy of Silvia, in The *Two Gentlemen of Verona*, when she returns his letter to Valentine, anticipates the shy speech of Portia to Bassanio, or of Beatrice to Benedick : 'It were possible for me,' says Beatrice, 'to say I loved nothing, so well as you but believe me not, and yet I lie not, I confess nothing, nor I deny nothing, I am sorry for my cousin.' The scene in the same play, where Julia makes a catalogue of her lovers for the criticism of Lucetta, is an earlier and fainter sketch of the conversation between Portia and Nerissa. Pope remarked that every single character in Shakespeare is as much an individual as those in life itself ; it is as impossible to find any two alike. 'Had all the speeches been printed without the very names of the persons, I believe one might have applied them with certainty to every speaker.' The remark is almost true as regards any single play; but it would be difficult task indeed to appropriate to their speakers all the wit-sallies of Beatrice and Rosalind, or to distinguish character in every line of their speeches. Yet all alike are women ; hardly anything they speak in their own characters could have been spoken by men. It is possible to extract from the plays some kind of general statement which, if it be not universally true of women, is at least true of Shakespeare's women. They are almost all practical, impatient of mere words, clear-sighted as to ends and means. They do not accept the promises to deny the conclusion, or decorate the inevitable with imaginative landings. Rosalind, Portia, Viola though they are rich in witty and eloquent discourse, are frank and simple in thought ; never deceived by their own eloquence. 'I'll do my best,' says Viola to the Duke,

> To woo your Lady : yet a bareful strife,
> Whoe'er I woo, myself would be his wife

To multiply instances would be tedious. Shakespeare's men

cannot, as a class, compare with his women for practical genius. They can think and imagine, as only Shakespeare's men can, but their imagination often masters and disables them. Self-deception, it would seem, is a male weakness. The whole controversy is summarised in the difference between Macbeth and his wife. She knows him well, and has no patience with his scruples and disliyings :

What thou wouldst highly,
That wouldst thou holily : wouldst not play false,
And you wouldst wrongly win.

For her, all the details and consequences of the crime are accepted with the crime itself. Her mind refuses to go behind the first crucial decision, or to waste precious time by speculating on the strangeness of things. But he, though he bends up each corporal agent to the terrible feat, cannot thus control the activities of his mind, or subdue them to a single practical end. His imagination will not be denied its ghastly play; he sees the murder as a single incident in the moving history of human woe, or forgets the need of the moment in the intellectual interest of his own sensation. When he acts, he acts in a frenzy which procures him oblivion.

"Because they do not ask questions of life, and do not doubt or deliberate concerning the fundamental grounds for action, Shakespeare's women are, in the main, either good or bad. The middle region of character, where mixed motives predominate, belongs chiefly to the men. The women act not on thought, but on instinct, which, once it is accepted, admits of no argument. The subtlety and breadth of Shakespeare's knowledge of feminine instinct, cannot be overpraised....He has no general theory; his women are often witty and daring, but they are never made all of wit and courage. Even Lady Macbeth's courage fails her when the affections of her childhood strike across her memory:

Had he not resembled
My father as he slept, I had done't.

Though she is magnificently rational and self controlled at the crisis of the action, the recoil of the senses, which she had mastered in her waking moments, comes over her again in sleep: 'here is the smell of the blood still; all the perfumes of Arbia will not sweeten this little hand'!.....Rosaland's easy grace and valuable wit do not hide from sight those more delicate touches of natcre, as when she half turns back to the

victorious Orlando—'Did you call, sir '—or breaks down, in the forest, at the sight of the blood-stained handkerchief, and utters the cry of a child: 'I would I were at home.' It is by small indications of this kind that Shakespeare convinces us of his knowledge.

"With Ophelia, Desdemona, Cordelia, his art is yet more wonderful, for it works in fewer words. None of these characters is theorised; none belongs to a type. Each is, in a sense, born of the situation, and inspired by it. The deserted maiden, the loyal wife, the daughter who becomes her father's protector—none of them has a thought or a feeling that forgets the situation and her own part in it, so that all of them win the love of the reader by their very simplicity and intensity. If Shakespeare had been called on to draw generic portraits of these three types, he would have despised the attempt. On his theatre, as in life, character is made by opportunity, and welded to endurance by the blows of Fate. The most beautiful characters of his creation depend for their beauty on their impulsive response to the need of the moment. 'Through the whole of the dialogue appropriated to Desdemona,' says Mrs. Jameson, 'There is not one general observation. Words are with her the vehicle of sentiment, and never reflection. It may well be doubted whether Shakespeare was fully conscious of this. He worked from the heart downwards; and his instinct on the right words.

"The comparative simplicity of character which distinguishes Shakespeare's women from his men is maintained throughout the plays. Cleopatra, unlike Antony, is at one with herself, and entertains no divided counsels. Regan and Goneril do not go motive-hunting, like Iago; they are hard and cruel and utterly self-assured. They have the certainty and ease in action that Hamlet coveted:

> With wings as swift
> As meditation, or the thoughts of love,
> They sweep to their revenge.

A similar confidence inspires the beautiful company of Shakespeare's self-devoted heroines. There is no Hamlet among them, no Jaques, no Biron. Their wit is quick and searching; but it is wholly at the command of their will and is never employed to disturb or destroy. Love and service are as natural to them as breathing. They are the sunlight of the plays, obscured at times by clouds and storms of melancholy and misdoing, but never subdued or defeated. In the Comedies they are the spirit

of happiness; in the Tragedies they are the only warrant and token of ultimate salvation, the refuge and sanctuary of faith."

17. SHAKESPEARE AS A DRAMATIC ARTIST.

Though we have no evidence at all to show what were Shakespeare's views on the theory and practice of drama, yet by reading his plays we can know the methods he generally adopts and thus arrive at certain deductions and build up our picture of Shakespeare as a dramatic artist. Various critics have attempted this task, and Raleigh, one of the soundest of Shakespeare's critics, has made the following observations in this connection, which are worth quoting: "There is not a particle of evidence to show that Shakespeare held any views on the theory of the drama or that the question was a live one in his mind. The species of play that he most affected in practice has been well described by Polonius; it is the 'tragical-comical-historical-pastoral, scene individable, or poem unlimited.' His first care was to get hold of a story that might be shaped to the needs of the theatre. It is possible, no doubt, for a dramatist, as it is for a novelist, to go another way to work. He may conceive living characters, and devise events to exhibit them; or he may start with a moral, a philosophy of life, an atmosphere, a sentiment, asd set his puppets to express it. But Shakespeare kept to the old road, and sought first for a story, as characters are made by the events of life. Others he permits to intrude upon the story, as old friends, or a new visitor, intrude upon a plan and disorder it. His wisdom of life grew, a rich instruction, upon the events and situations of his fable. But the story came first with him,—as it came first with his audience, as it comes first with every child.

"Shakespeare spent no care, one would say, on the original choice of a theme, but took it as he found it, if it looked promising. Then he dressed his characters, and put them in action, so that his opening scenes are often a kind of postulate which the spectator or reader is asked to grant. At this point of the play improbability is of no account; the intelligent reader will become alert and critical only when the next step is taken and he is asked to concede the truth of the argument—given these persons in this situation, such and such events will follow. Let it be granted that an old king divides his realm among his three daughters, exacting from each of them a profession of ardent affection. Let it be granted that a merchant borrows money of a Jew on condition that if he fails to repay it punc-

tually he shall forfeit a pound of his own flesh. Let it be granted that a young prince sees a ghost, who tells him that his uncle, the reigning king, and second husband of his mother, is a murderer. The hypothetical preambles of *King Lear* *The Merchant of Venice*, and *Hamlet* are really much more elaborate than this, but this may serve to illustrate Shakespeare's method. Before appealing to the sympathies and judgment of his audience he has to acquaint them with the situation. Until the situation is created he caonnot get to work on his characters. His plays open with a postulate; then the characters begin to live, and, as Act follows Act, come into ever closer and more vital relation to the course of events; till, at last the play is closed, sometimes triumphantly and inevitably, by exhibiting the result of all that has gone before; at other times feebly and carelessly, by neglecting the new interests that have grown around the characters, and dragging the story back into its predestined shape.

"If this be so, it makes some kinds of criticism idle. Why, it is asked, did not Cordelia humour her father a little? She was too stubborn and rude, where tact and sympathetic understanding might, without any violation of truth, have saved the situation. It is easy to answer this question by enlarging on the character of Cordelia, and on that touch of obstinacy which is often found in very pure and unselfish women. But this is really besides the mark; and those who spend so much thought on Cordelia are apt to forget Shakespeare. If Cordelia had been perfectly tender and tactful, there would have been no play. The situation would have been saved, and the dramatist who was in attendance to celebrate the sequel of the situation might have packed up his pipes and gone home. This is not to say that the character of Cordelia is drawn carelessly or inconsistently. But it is a character invented for the situation so that to argue from the character to the plot is to invert the true order of things in the artist's mind."

In the great tragedies story and character are marvellously adapted to each other; hardly anything is forced or twisted to bring it within the limits of the scheme. By the time that he wrote *Lear* and *Othello*, Shakespeare was a master craftsman, deeply acquainted with life, which had to be portrayed, and thoroughly exercised, by long practice, in the handling of all those dramatic schemes and patterns which had to be filled. There is thus in the mature plays of Shakespeare an inextricable interweaving of plot and character. In this connection, Nicoll

has observed in his book, *Studies in Shakespeare*: "For the study of Shakespeare's plays simple character-study, such as are popular among the commentators, are not sufficient. The character-study, necessary as it may be, must be related to the larger whole, to the emergencies of the drama, before it can prove of any definite value. Merely to explain Hamlet's character tells us nothing, for after all we are dealing, not with a man, but with a play. Before we learn anything of Shakespeare's larger purpose we must pass beyond and see, first, how that character influences the dramatic construction, and, secondly, how far it is itself determined by the preconceived plot story of the play. Thus Hamlet's nature and the nature of Othello seem both to have been conceived in their special terms in order to make possible the dramatic presentation of the passed historical narrative of Belleforest and the fictional tale of Cinthio respectively. The construction of *King Lear*, on the other hand, betrays evidence of having been determined by the character of Lear himself. Misled by romantic critics with little *flair* for the theatre, a number of nineteenth and twentieth century Shakespearean commentators have failed to think the author of Hamlet other than as a great creator of character. Equally misled by the enthusiasm for the stage, a number of our most recent critics have apparently regarded Shakespeare purely as a weaver of finely constructed dramas. The truth lies in the higher harmony. For Shakespeare character is interwoven inextricably with plot; and only by an examination of both, not separately but together, can we hope to reach even to the fringe of his final aim."

Shakespeare's plays are works of art, and not mere chronicles of facts. He applies certain measures in order to secure unity in each of his plays, so that none of them is a chaos or a patchwork. In this connection Raleigh has observed: "The Greeks secured unity by means of the chorus, which mediates between the actors and the spectators, bespeaking attention, interpreting events and guiding the feelings. Shakespeare had no chorus, but he attains the same and in another way. In almost all his plays there is a clear enough point of view; there is some character, or group of characters through whose eyes the events of the play must be seen, if they are to be seen in the right perspective. Some of his characters, he keeps nearer to himself than others. The meanings of *Love's Labour's Lost* cannot be read through the eyes of Arnado, nor that of *Twelfth Night* through the eyes of Malvolio. What comes of regarding

the play of *Hamlet* from the point of Polonius!......Moreover this point gradually shifts as the years pass by. It would be vain to attempt to read *Romeo and Juliet* from the standpoint of Lady Capulet; even no calm and experienced a guide as Friar Laurence can lead us to the heart of the play. On the other hand, *The Tempest* or *The Winter's Tale* cannot be read aright by those whose sympathies are concentrated on Miranda and Ferdinand, or on Florizel and Perdita.....We sympathise with Miranda and Ferdinand, but it is not their passion that we feel, rather it is the benevolence and wisdom of Prospero rejoicing in their passion.

"There is always a centre of interest in the plays of Shakespeare. Some of the characters are kept in the full light of this area of perfect vision. Others, moving in the outer field of vision, have no value save in relating in this centre. His habit of over-crowding his canvas is sometimes detrimental to the main impression. Edmund's love-intrigues, for instance, in *King Lear*,—who does not find them a tedious piece of machinery? They belong to the story, but they do not help the play. For the most part, and in the most carefully ordered of the plays, the subsidiary characters and events are used to enhance the main impression. They have no full and independent existence; they are seen only in a limited aspect, and have just enough vitality to enable them to play their allotted part in the action."

Shakespeare in his plays shows a perfect sense of the stage. In this connection, Nicoll remarks: "Recent study of Shakespeare's plays has established beyond a shadow of doubt that he had a perfect sense of the theatre. Rarely, if ever, in his maturer dramas does he leave an actor purposely with nothing to say or do. Frequently, however, he left an actor stand throughout a scene without speaking, for a definite purpose, to show a certain mood working within him. That mood is generally reflection or watchfulness. Examples may be taken from *Macbeth* and *Hamlet*. When Hamlet stands silent at the ghost's speech and then bursts into a rhodomontade of furious bombast, we feel that Shakespeare wished to show his hero plunged in reflection and suddenly awakened out of that reflection as out of a trance. So, too, when Hamlet listens to Horatio's account of the ghost's appearance, and replies with inconsequent nothings, he is intended by Shakespeare to be in a state of profound or bewildered mediation. In the same way, Horatio's silence while Hamlet speaks to Osric or while the

prince raves over Ophelia's grave, betrays his watchfulness, as does the silence of Banquo when Duncan is discovered lying in his gore. Indeed, it may almost be accepted as an axiom that when some chief character breaks from loquacity to a silence broken only by monosyllables, or by piercing or inconsequent questions, that that character is intended to be either in a state of reflection, meditation or of extreme watchfulness....Besides this, there is the silence of a character off the stage, not revealed on Shakespeare's part by any direct allusion or reference. Horatio disappears from the scenes of *Hamlet* for over two Acts, but when he reappears it is in the guise of a trusted confident, and moreover, as a slightly sceptical deterrent upon Hamlet. This is one type of silence. Another type of silence is the silence of the hero. Quote frequently, so frequently, as to become a 'law' with Shakespeare, when one of his heroes is cut out of the drama for any length of time, it is to reveal a change in his character. Thus Hamlet, after departing for England and leaving the stage free for Laertes, Ophelia, Claudius and Gertrude, reappears in an entirely altered spirit. His continual harping on 'It is no matter' reveals a changed mood in him which coincides with and is partly caused by Ophelia's death. Macbeth, too, vanishes for a time, and he also is altered. His consciousness of wasted effort, his wistful looking back on things that were or might have been, display the tremendous torment through which his soul has passed. Lear in the same way disappears after death scenes, and his re-entry coincides with his awaking to sanity; another absence from the stage is followed by his altered spirit at the close of the fifth Act. Hamlet's soliloquies on board the ship are not spoken for us with audible voice; Macbeth's crimes are not shown to our sensual eyes; Lear's moments of soul-tormenting madness are not openly revealed. Our imagination, as with all great works of art, must supply the many gaps between the known and the unknown."

18. SHAKESPEARE'S USE OF THE SOLILOQUY.

Soliloquy is 'a discourse made by one in solitude' or in other words, it may be defined as 'thinking aloud'. It is not natural for a man to talk to himself but when the heart is so surcharged with emotion, it naturally bursts into involuntary words. But the content of the words in which the overfraught heart finds its vent must be of a confidential nature, that does not admit of communication to any one else except the speaker's own self. The use of soliloquy is justified only under

these circumstances; otherwise it becomes childish, clumsy and unnatural.

Shakespeare has made frequent use of soliloquies in his plays, and they include some of his greatest writing: the soliloquies of Hamlet, Iago and Macbeth. In this connection, Saintsbury has observed: "Shakespeare's methods of drawing character are numerous. The most obvious of them is the soliloquy. This has been found fault with as unnatural—but only by those who do not know nature. The fact is that soliloquy is so universal that it escapes observers who are not acute and active. Everybody, except persons of quite abnormal nature, 'talks to himself as he walks by himself, and thus himself says he'. According to temperament and intellect he is more or less frank with himself; but his very attempts to deceive himself are more indicative of character than his bare actions. The ingenious idea of the 'palace of truth' owes all its ingenuity and force to this fact. Now, Shakespeare constructed his work, in it soliloquies, as a vast palace of truth, in which those characters (who) are important enough were compelled thus to reveal themselves. Nothing contributes quite so much to the solidity and completeness of his system of developing plot by the development of character; nor does anything display more fully the extraordinary power and range, the 'largeness and universality', of his own soul. For the soliloquy, like all weapons or instruments which unite sharpness and weight, is an exceedingly dangerous weapon to wield. It may very easily be overdone in the novel (where there are not the positive checks on it which the drama provides) even more than in the drama itself. It is very difficult to do well and restrain themselves from overdoing it; that the soliloquies will represent not the character but the author; that they will assist in building up for us, if we desire it, the nature of Browne or Jones, but will do very much for the construction or revelation of that of Browne's or Jone's heroes and heroines. Shakespeare has avoided or overcome all these points. His soliloquies, or set speeches of a soliloquial character, are never, in the mature plays, overdone; they are never futile or unnatural; and, above all, they are so variously adapted to the idiosyncrasies of the speaker that, while many people have tried to distil an essence of Shakespeare out of them, nobody has succeeded. From Shakespeare's soliloquies we hardly see him even in a glass darkly; but we see the characters who are made to utter them as plain as the handwriting upon the wall."

"First and foremost, the functions of a soliloquy is self-revelation In the case of persons who are deeply contemplative, and who are more busy in the world of thought rather than action, it is difficult to understand their motives. The dramatist, under such circumstances, makes them speak out their inmost thoughts, so that the consistency between their character may be perceived by the audience. The soliloquy, then as Hudson has rightly observed, is the dramatist's means of taking us down into the hidden recesses of a person's nature, and of revealing those springs of conduct which ordinary dialogue provides him with no adequate opportunity to disclose. He cannot himself direct them, as the novelist does. He, therefore, allows them to do the work of dissection on their account. They think aloud to themselves, and we overhear 'what they say.' Though examples of such soliloquies, where the inward character is revealed, are numerous, the best example of it is Macbeth's soliloquy beginning with

> If it were done, when 'tis done, 'twere well
> It were done quickly.

Though he is bent upon securing worldly prosperity at all cost, he is not unconscious of the noble qualities of his royal guest and victim and to the demands of duty:

> He's here in double trust ;
> First, as I am his kinsman and his subject,
> Strong both against the deed ; then as his host,
> Who should against his murderer shut the door,
> Nor bear the knife myself—

as well as that

> this Duncan
> Hath borne his faculties so meek, hath been
> So clear in his great office, that his virtues
> Will plead like angels, trumpet-tongued, against
> The deep damnation of his taking-off ;
> And pity, like a naked new-born babe,
> Striding the blast, or heaven's cherubim, horsed
> Upon the sightless couriers of the air,
> Shall blow the horrid deed in every eye,
> That tears shall drown the wind.

Here Macbeth seems to be shedding tears himself on account of the momentary realisation of the cruel crookedness of his heart which in spite of Duncan's nobility of character still entertains the wish of murdering him. But ambition is the cardinal point of his character, and it is this that leads him forcibly to the terrible crime:

I have no spur
To prick the sides of my intent, but only
Vaulting ambition, which overleaps itself
And falls on the other.

"Sometimes a soliloquy serves the purpose of giving information to the audience, though the intention is disguised. A fine example of this type of soliloquy is that of Edgar's in *King Lear* Act II, scene iii:

I heard myself proclaim'd ;
And, be the happy hollow of a tree,
Escaped the hunt. No port is free ; no place
That guard, and most unusual vigilance,
Does not attend my taking. While I may scape,
I will perceive myself ; and 'm bethought
To take the leasest and most poorest shape,
That every penury, in contempt of man,
Brought near to beast ; my face I'll grime with filth ;
Blanket my loins ; elf my hair in knots ;
And with presented nakedness outface
The winds and persecutions of the sky."

Sometimes a soliloquy, especially in the case of villains, discharges the function of explanation. In this connection, Bradley has remarked in his book: "With Shakespeare soliloquy generally gives information regarding the secret springs as well as the outward course of the plot; and, moreover, it is curious point of technique with him that the soliloquies of his villains sometimes read almost like explanations offered to the audience." In *Othello Iago's* soliloquies explain to the audience the real motives of his crimes. Richard III in his soliloquies specifies the reason for his resolution to be proved a villain:

I, that am not shaped for sportive tricks,
Nor made to court an amorous looking-glass ;
I, that am curtailed of this fair proportion,
Cheated of feature by dissembling nature,
Deformed, unfinished, sent before my time
Into this breathing World, scarce half made up,
And that so lamely and unfashionable
That dogs bark at me as I halt by them ;
And therefore since I cannot prove a lover,
To entertain these fair well-spoken days,
I am determined to prove a villain
And hate the idle pleasures of these days.

Soliloquies also add an air of idealisation to the play, as almost all the important soliloquies of Shakespeare are highly

lyrical and magnificently poetical. They include some of Shakespeare's greatest writings and stand like 'so many towers of serene strength in the midst of common habitation.'

Thus Shakespeare's soliloquies generally discharge four functions: self-revelation, information, explanation and idealisation. Some soliloquies serve more than one function, and it is rarely that a soliloquy combines in itself all the four functions.

19. SHAKESPEARE'S HUMOUR.

Shakespeare's humour, next to his poetry, is the most important feature of his plays, and no study of his plays is complete which does not give due importance to it. Referring to it in his book, *English Humour*, Priestley has rightly remarked: "There are two out of the many gigantic legacies he left the world that we in England are peculiarly fitted to enjoy. The first is his poetry, the actual dance and glitter of verse. The second is his humour." Referring to the importance of humour in the plays of Shakespeare, Dowden has pointed out in his book, *Shakespeare—His Mind and Art*: "A study of Shakespeare which fails to take account of Shakespeare's humour must remain essentially incomplete The character and spiritual history of a man who is endowed with a capacity for humorous appreciation of the world must differ throughout in every particular from that of the man whose moral nature has rippled over with genial laughter. At whatever final issue Shakespeare arrived after long spiritual travail as to the attainment of his life, that precise issue rather than another was arrived at in part by virtue of the fact of Shakespeare's humour."

The chief characteristic of Shakespeare's humour is that, like his genius, it is many-sided. He does not pledge himself as a dramatist to any one view of life. In this connection Dowden remarks: "Shakespeare abounds in kindly mirth; he receives an exquisite pleasure from the alert wit and bright good sense of a Rosalind; he can dandle a fool as tenderly as any nurse qualified to take a baby from the birth can deal with her charge. But Shakespeare is not pledged to deep-eyed, ultra-amiability. With Jaques he can rail at the world, while remaining curiously aloof from all deep concern about its interests this way or that. With Timon he can turn upon the world with a rage no less than that of Swift, and discover in man and woman a creature as abominable as the Yahoo. In

other words, the humour of Shakespeare, like his total genius, is dramatic."

The second main characteristic of Shakespeare's humour is that although he is very fond of laughter, mere laughter wearies him. In this connection Dowden points out: "The only play of Shakespeare's, out of nearly forty, which is farcical, *The Comedy of Errors* was written in the poet's earliest period of authorship, and was formed upon the suggestion of a preceding price. It has been observed with truth by Gervinus that the farcical incidents of this play have been connected by Shakespeare with a tragic background, which is probably his invention. With beauty, or with pathos, or with thought, Shakespeare can mingle mirth, and then he is happy, and knows how to deal with play or wit or humorous characterisation ; but an entirely comic subject somewhat disconcerts the poet." The tradition of the English drama had favoured the juxtaposition of serious and comic ; but it was reserved for Shakespeare to make each a part of the other—to interpenetrate tragedy with comedy, and comedy with tragic earnestness. In Marlowe's *Doctor Faustus* the serious and the comic portions of the play move upon different planes of feeling, and the one cannot assist or co-operate with the other. But even in his earlier tragedies Shakespeare is not afraid of mixing the important aspects of human life—the tragic and the comic. He is not afraid that the passions and anguish of Romeo and Juliet will be spoiled by the long-winded stories of the Nurse. This characteristic of Shakespeare's humour shows his fidelity to facts, his faculty of seeing things as they are, his justice, his impartiality, because he lets no side escape him. To him the hero and the valet are equally important, and it is desirable to ascertain what light one may throw on the other.

Shakespeare's humour is genial, kindly, sincere and tolerant, having no touch of cynicism. In this connection Dowden remarks: "The genial laughter of Shakespeare at human absurdity is free from even amiable cynicism, which gives to the humour of Jane Austen a certain piquant flavour; it is like the play of summer lightning, which hurts no living creature, but surprises, illuminates and charms." In fact it seems as if Shakespeare was one of those common people whom he tried to ridicule, because he never laughs at them with the air of superiority. Referring to the tolerant aspect of Shakespeare's humour, Priestley has remarked: "What a world of wit and high spirits and happy laughter is here! face after face,

scene after scene, enchantingly etched, return to the memory: the gay Mercurtio and the prattling Nurse; Bottom and Peter Quince in the magic wood; Rosalind and Touchstone capping jests; Sir Toby, Sir Andrew, and the clown at their catches; Benedick and Beatrice playing lovers, and Dogberry addressing the watch; Slender and Sir Hugh Evans at Windsor; Pistol and Fluellen at the wars; Autolycus cozening the shepherds, Falstaff marching his ragged regiment into immortality: to think of this world is to stand besides Prospero and watch him point his wand. The master of the revels, smiling so serenely at his enchanting shadows, lived here and breathed this air. Of the width and splendour of imagination to be found in the whole world of humour that Shakespeare created, it is not necessary to speak; we could not copy it if we tried; we can only wonder and give praise. There is, however, in this world of his an air of large tolerance, of superb magnanimity, that is ours for the asking. We like to think good nature, tolerance, kindness are English qualities, and certainly they are necessary for humour, of which we have never had any lack. Shakespeare who 'takes up the meanest subjects with the same tenderness that we do an insect's wing, and would not kill a fly', does but head and crown the list of our humorists, men who have not lent their wits to an inquisition but have laughed out of the depths of their affections: 'Mortal men, mortal men!' cries Falstaff; and then, long after, in the sunset close of Cymbeline, comes 'Pardon's the world for all.'"

The last though not least, quality of Shakespeare's humour is that it is all-pervasive. In this connection Dowden has rightly observed: "The humour of Shakespeare, however, is much more than a laughter-producing power. It is a presence and pervading influence throughout his most earnest creations. This is which preserves Shakespeare from all eager and shrill intensity; this it is which makes his emotions voluminous and massive. And of this humour there are two principal stages or degrees. First, given a person or an event, a passion or a thought, Shakespeare examines it on every side, compares it with all other objects with which it may naturally be connected, or may happen to be associated; puts it in its environment, sees the fine and the coarse, the poetic and the prosaic, and thus acquires a rich pregnant feeling for it. So abundant and varied is the body of fact which he is possessed of that one portion, as it were, balances the other, and he is saved from all violence and extravagance that originate in the

partial views of the idealist. Ophelia's death is pathetic; but the pathos of Shakespeare is not the pretty pathos of Beaumont and Fletcher, a soft, a sweet and tender sorrow, gentle investiture of melancholy. Shakespeare sees the fact from the Queen's point of view, and from Hamlet's; from the priest's and from the grave-digger's points of view. That is to say, he sees the fact in the round; and the pathos of Ophelia's death is in the drama as real as it would be if the occurrence became actual. This is the manner in which the humour of Shakespeare works in the first stage and degree.

"But, secondly, when all the realities of this world and of time have been represented as far as they can be in their totality, Shakespeare measures these by absolute standards. He lays the measuring-reed of the infinity side by side of what is finite, and he perceives how litlte, how imperfect, the finite is. And he smiles at human greatness, while yet he pays loyal homage to what is great; he smiles at human love, and human joy, while yet they are deeply real to him (more real to him than they could possibly be to an eager intense Shelley); it is Prospero's smile upon setting the new happiness of youthful lovers:

> So glad of this as they I cannot be,
> Who are surprised with all; but my rejoicing
> In nothing can be more.

And he smiles at human sorrow, while he enters into the deep anguish of the soul; he knows that for it too there is an end and a quietus. The greatest poetic seers are not angry, or eager, or hortatory, or objugatory, or shrill. As Ruskin points out, 'Homer and Shakespeare are too great for contest;.....men to whose unoffended, uncondemning sight, the whole of human nature reveals itself in a pathetic weakness with which they will not strive, or in mournful and transitory strength, which they dare not praise'. Shakespeare sees with purged eyes; and he loves and pities men. But while this view of things from an extra-mundane point of vision is to be taken account of in any study of Shakespeare's mind and art, it must be insisted upon that the facts are at the same time thoroughly apprehended, studied, and felt from the various points which are strictly finite and mundane."

20. THE FOOL IN SHAKESPEARE.

In all Shakespeare's plays the clown or the fool plays quite an important part. He makes his appearance even in his serious tragedies. There is the drunken porter in *Macbeth*, and even

that early blood-curdling horror. *Titus Andronicus*, in which only two of the fourteen main characters are left alive at the end, has a clown, who incidentally is hanged. The 'clown' should be distinguished from the 'fool'. By 'clown' Shakespeare meant, roughly, a man who was unintentionally funny because of his ignorance, like Dogberry, and the word has nothing to do with the circus; the 'fool', on the other hand, was a professional jester at court or in a rich man's house, chosen because of the sharpness of his wits. The best known 'fools' in Shakespeare are Touchstone and Feste; but there is a 'Fool' in *King Lear*, a tragic character and little more than a boy, who tries to out-jest his master's injuries and dies in his service.

Referring to the position of the fool in the plays of Shakespeare, Gordon has oberved: "The two extremes of clowning were the rustic fool and the court jester. All the varieties are mixtures of these two. Their task was, of course, the general one of making the company or the audience laugh, and, more particularly, of keeping the dialogue going in the intervals of action. They supplied also, when necessary, both *Song* and *Dance*. Even Dull the constable joins the general breakdown at the end of *Love's Labour's Lost*. In the exchange of conversation, their technique, their principal and expected contribution, was (consciously or unconsciously) to extract fun from words. It was a foible of the age, which Shakespeare thoroughly and unaffectedly shared, to be everlastingly excited and amused over forms, shapes, sounds, and meanings of words; and the foible easy to understand, for the language was bubbling over with new inventions. Much licence was allowed; and when the fool is proficient, he never lacks partners among the ladies and gentlemen. It is a brisk bandy-ball of words, and we tire of it before they do.

"It was the fashion of the time to call these comic persons all, indifferently, Clowns; but obviously there are great differences. I think the best division of the professional comic men in Shakespeare's plays—at any rate, the best division technically—would be this: (1) those who play with words; and (2) those who are played with by them—those, that, who are sufficiently masters of the English language to make fun out of it; and those who are mastered by it as to give fun unconsciously. With one or two exceptions—Touchstone perhaps, at his best—I find the second, the helpless class, more amusing, and of a more lasting humour, than the first.

"In the first class are the professional Fools headed by Touchstone, with Feste, and such court-bred attendants as Moth—that 'tender juvenal'. In the same class, though touching on the second, come the men-servants, the roguish valets, like Speed, and Launce, and Launcelot. They see the fun full enough, but, sometimes, through illiterate ambition, they take a fall.

"In the second class come rustics like Costard, artisans, like Bottom, and officials like Dogberry, Verges, and Dull. The amusement they cause is at their own expense. They are complacent, vain, and adorably stupid. Sometimes they achieve pure nonsense, than which nothing is more difficult to explain..... There is nothing in Shakespeare more certainly the work of genius than the *mettled* nonsense, the *complacent* nonsense, the perfectly contented and ideal inanity which Shakespeare, in some of these characters has presented to us."

Shakespeare's handling of the Fool was one of his great contributions to the Elizabethan drama, and it was in the portrayal of such characters that he first showed his excellence in the art of characterisation. In this connection, Dover Wilson has observed in his book. *The Essential Shakespeare*: "Shakespeare did not easily come to character-making. At first the only kind he seemed to be able to endow with full humanity was comic character, especially comic character in low life. The living be'ngs in *A Midsummer-Night's Dream* are the Mechanicals, and in *The Two Gentlemen* Lance. Marlowe had rejected 'such conceits as clownage keeps in pay'; Shakespeare made them the headstone of his corner. The old type stage-clown had been contemptible enough no doubt; the jests of the famous Tarlton that have come down to us are mere flimflam. Yet Shakespeare saw its possibilities and gave it a new and glorious lease of life by humanising it and planting it once more in English soil. Under his hands the conventional buffoon becomes an English yokel. In *The Two Gentlemen* he gives us a representative of both types, old and new, Speed and Lance. Was he testing his audience to discover which had their suffrage If so, the issue is not in doubt; for Lance became the father of a long line—of Bottom, the Dromios, ,Costard, Launcelot, Gobbo, to name but a handful of them, while Bottom's self-description, 'tender ass', will serve as a label for the whole species. But Shakespeare did more than humanise; he as ever, subtilised. As his hand grew more practised, his human clown developed along two lines, which we may call 'the dry clown' and 'the silly clown'; the former

a butt to be laughed at an English clod untroubled with a spark, the latter a simpleton who 'uses his folly like a stalking-horse and under the presentation of that shoots his wit'. Neither sort of fool talks rubbish, be it observed, though perplexed editors have of ten supposed so; the one blunders or wanders most ludicrously, the other quibbles or equivocates with exquisite finesse. Thus Shakespeare made his clowns worthy the attention of the judicious, of a Southampton or a Ben Jonson. William and Touchstone in *As You Like it* furnish examples of both kinds, the mention of Touchstone shows to what lengths Shakespeare carried the type first created in Lance. It is pretty certain that full development had to wait until he found a comic character capable of interpreting it. The departure of William from his company about 1559, and the coming of Robert Armin meant much to Shakespeare. It made Feste and the Fool in *King Lear* possible."

The Elizabethan audience were very fond of being tickled by the jokes of the Clown who had become an essential part of every theatrical company. Shakespeare, mort than any of his eminent contemporaries, complied with the taste. In this connection, Gordon has remarked: "The Clown was at this time so much a stock character that he is sometimes not even given a name; and he relied so much on 'gagging' that in his entrances he is not even given a part: 'Enter Clown, say something *exist*." He was a stage rather than a literary property, and his secret is contained in a single name: the name of Tarleton. Richard Tarleton, the comic actor, created the part of the Clown, and created it so effectively—so completely captured the age—that writers of comedy had to provide him with a part whether they wished it or not. As a rule, I should think, they were only too willing: for Tarleton was of a class of comedian who was only to walk on and look at the audience, to throw it into screams of laughter. There was nobody like him, and all London mourned when he died. He is Spenser's pleasant Willy, and probably Shakespeare's Yorick. Tarleton died in 1588, before any of Shakespeare's work appeared on the stage: but he left successors who continued his tradition. He was succeeded by Will Kempe, his understudy. Kempe had a great reputation as early as 1589, which lasted until his death in 1609: and he was no sooner dead than his place was taken by another student of Tarletonizing—Robert Armin. Armin was at his height in 1610, and was supreme in his own line during the earlier half of James's reign. It is a

complete succession for more than a generation. Kempe was Shakespeare's man. He was the original Dogberry in *Much Ado* and Peter in *Romeo and Juliet*; he probably acted Launcelot, Launce, Touchstone, Feste, and the Gravedigger in *Hamlet* and, generally, took the Clown's part as a matter of course.

"We are apt to think of the dramatist as all-powerful in these matters. But it is not so now; and it was not so then. Indeed the balance was quite the other way. Like the later Harlequins, these professional Clowns 'claimed the limited licence which enjoys in mathematics'. The Tarletons of the stage prided themselves on being able to do without the dramatist altogether. Tarleton and Kempe were celebrated for what was called 'extemporal wit'. They made things up as they went along. They gagged, and we have it on record that these were often the most striking parts of their performance. The better dramatists bitterly resented this tyranny of the comic actor—see Shakespeare's injunction in *Hamlet* to say nothing but what was set down for them, aimed at Kempe. In time the best of them revolted against it; but for the most part, if they wished to be popular, they had in some degree to submit. Shakespeare submitted with a better grace than most. In this connection we should remember:

"(1) That the part of the Clown in Shakespeare was not written *in vacue*: it was written with one eye on Kempe. It followed, therefore, to some extent, Kempe's methods, and Kempe's type of joke. Shakespeare may even have learned something from Kempe, as Moliere did from Scaramouche.

"(2) The other comic parts, though they might differ from the stock part of the Clown, were inevitably infected by it: for this reason, if for no other, that their performers were obliged to play up to the Clown, and as the phrase went 'minister occasion' to him. Even here, therefore, the art of Tarleton and of Kempe must have guided the hand of Shakespeare. If I am not exaggerating, this explains a good deal; and should not be forgotten when we remark on the sameness of some of the jests in the comedies, and the strong family likeness there is in much of the routine work of the Clowns themselves."

21. SHAKESPEARE'S USE OF THE SUPERNATURAL.

In his plays Shakespeare often makes use of supernatural beings like witches, ghosts and fairies. They give us an impression that the impulses and passions that shape man's life

to happy or unhappy ends seem to owe their power to something greater than man, and refuse his control. His objects in introducing the supernatural element and his methods are discussed at length by Moulton in his book, *Shakespeare as a Dramatic Artist*. There he has observed : "Besides Destiny, the Shakespearean drama admits direct supernatural agencies—witches, ghosts, apparitions, as well as portents and violations of natural law. It appears to me idle to contend that these in Shakespeare are not really supernatural, but must be interpreted as delusions of their victims. There may be single cases, such as the appearance of Banquo to Macbeth, where, as no eye sees it but his own, the apparition may be resolved into a hallucination. But to determine Shakespeare's general practice it is enough to point to the Ghost in *Hamlet*, which as seen by three persons and on separate occasions, is indisputably objective, and a single instance is sufficient to establish the assumption in the Shakespearean drama of supernatural beings with real existence. Zeal for Shakespeare's rationality is a main source of the opposite view; but for the assumption of such supernatural existence the responsibility lies not with Shakespeare, but with the opinion of the age he is portraying. A more important question is how far Shakespeare uses such supernatural agency as a motive force in his plays; how far does he allow it to enter into the working of events, for the interpretation of which he is responsible? On this point Shakespeare's usage is clear and subtle: he uses the agency of the supernatural to intensify and to illuminate human action, not to determine it.

"Supernautical agency intensifying human action is illustrated in *Macbeth*. No one can seriously doubt the objective existence of the Witches in this play, or that they are endowed with super-human sources of knowledge. But the question is, do they in reality turn Macbeth to crime? Macbeth has already been meditating treason in his heart when he meets the Witches on the heath. His secret thoughts—which he betrays in his guilty start—have been an invitation to the powers of evil, and they have obeyed the summons: Macbeth has already ventured a descent, and they add an impulse downward. To bring this out more clearly, Shakespeare keeps Banquo side by side with Macbeth through the critical stage of the temptation. Banquo has made no overtures to temptation, and to him the tempters have no mission. When directly challenged by Banquo, they do respond and give out an oracle for him. But

into his upright mind the poison germs of insight into the future fall harmlessly; it is because Macbeth is already tainted that these breed in him a fever of crime. In the second incident of the Witches, so far from their being the tempters, it is Macbeth who seeks them and forces from them knowledge of the future. Yet, even here, what is the actual effect of their revelation upon Macbeth? It is like that of his air-drawn dagger, only to marshal him along the way that he is going. They bid him beware Macduff! he answers, 'Thou hast harp'd my fear aright'. They give him preternatural pledges of safety: are these a help to him in enjoying the rewards of sin? On the contrary, as a matter of fact we find Macbeth, in panic of suspicion, seeking security by means of daily butchery; the oracles have produced in him confidence enough to give agony to the bitterness of his betrayal, but not such confidence as to lead him to dispense with a single one of natural bulwarks to tyranny. The function of the Witches throughout the action of this play is exactly expressed by a phrase Banquo uses in connection with them: they are only 'instruments of darkness', assisting to carry forward courses of conduct initiated independently of them. Macbeth has made the destiny which the Witches reveal.

"Again, supernatural agency is used to illuminate human action—the course of events in a drama not ceasing to obey natural causes, but becoming, by the addition of supernatural agency, endowed with a new art-beauty. . . .Fate will allow none but Macduff to be the slayer of Macbeth. True: but Macduff (who moreover knows nothing of his destiny) is the most deeply injured of Macbeth's subjects, and as a fact we find it needs the news of his injury to rouse him to his task; as he approaches the battle he feels that the ghosts of his wife and children will haunt him if he allows any other to be the tyrant's executioner. Thus far the interpretation of history might go: but the oracular machinery which Shakespeare has introduced points dimly to Macduff before the first breath of the King's suspicion has assailed him, and the suggestiveness becomes clearer and clearer as the convergence of events carries the action to its climax. The natural working of human events has been undisturbed, only the spectator's mind has been endowed with a special illumination for receiving them.

"In another and very different way we have supernatural agency called in to throw a peculiar illumination over human events. In *Julius Caesar* the supernatural background of

storm, tempest and portents assist the emotional agitation throughout the second stage of the action. These are clearly supernatural in that they are made to suggest a mystic sympathy with, and indeed prescience of mutations in human life. Yet their function is simply that of illumination: they cast a glow of emotion over the spectator as he watches the train of events, though all the while the action of these events remains within the sphere of natural causes.

"In these various forms Shakespeare introduces supernatural agency into his dramas. Though these supernatural characters are real, yet Shakespeare draws upon the supernatural only for a small portion of his total effect, allowing it to carry further or to illustrate, but not to mould or determine a course of events. It will readily be granted that he brings effect enough out of a supernatural incident to justify the use of it to our rational sense of economy."

22. SHAKESPEARE'S SONNETS.

The Sonnets of Shakespeare have been held in great esteem by poets as well as critics. The following tributes from some great English poets are noteworthy:

"'With this same key
Shakespeare unlocked his heart."

Wordsworth.

**"With this same key
Shakespeare unlocked his heart'** once more !
Did Shakespeare ? If so, the less Shakespeare he !

Browning.

"No whit the less like Shakespeare, but undoubtedly the less like Browning."

Swinburne.

"If any should be curious to discover
Whether to you I am a friend or lover,
Let him read Shakespeare's sonnets taking thence
A whetstone for their dull intelligence
That tears and will not cut."

Shelley.

"I loved thee, Spirit, and love, nor can
The soul of Shakespeare love thee more."

Tennyson.

Gollancz giving an introduction to the Sonnets has observed in his preface to his book *Shakespeare's Sonnets*: "The Sonnets, as printed in 1609, present on the whole an orderly arrangment, though here and there it is somewhat difficult to"

find the connecting links. If it could be proved that any one Sonnet is out of place, the whole chain would perhaps be spoilt, but no such 'broken link' can be adduced.

"The Sonnet-sequence consists of three main sections: A. Sonnets I—CXXVI; B. Sonnets CXXVII—CLII; C—Sonnets CLIII-CLIV. Sections A and B are closely connected; Section C may be a sort of Epilogue to B, but is more probably an independent exercise in sonneteering, based on a Latin version of a Greek Epigram found in the ninth book of the Anthology, composed by Byzantine Marianus, a writer probably of the fifth century after Christ.

"The general theme of the Sonnets is the poet's almost idolatrous love for a younger friend, a noble, and beauteous youth, beloved for his own sweet sake, not for his exalted rank; this unselfish, whole-hearted, and soul absorbing devotion passes through various stages of doubt, distrust, infidelity, jealousy, and estrangement; after the period of trial, love is again restored, stronger and greater than before:—

> O benefit of ill ! now I find true
> That better is by evil still made better
> And ruined love' when it is built anew,
> Grows fairer than at first, more strong, far greater.

" 'Friendship Triumphant' is the subject of the story unfolded in Sonnets I.-CXXVI. Love between man and man, triumphing over the love of man for woman, was no uncommon theme in Elizabethan literature. The denouement of *The Two Gentlemen of Verona* turns upon it, while Lyly's *Campaspe* (Pub. 1584) illustrates the same truth:—Alexander the Great and Apelles, the most famed of Grecian painters, were intimate friends, their friendship was well-nigh wrecked through a woman's charms; the painter became enamoured of the monarch's mistress while painting her likeness, but Alexander generously cancelled his claim; his friendship for the painter was greater than his love for the fair captive.

"The Sonnet-drama seems to have many points in common with Lyly's Court-play; instead of the painter of 'Venus Andyomene', we have the poet of 'Venus and Adonis'; instead of magnanimity on the part of the high born and exalted friend, it is the wronger it is the wronged poet who bears forgivingly 'the strong offence's cross ; instead of a reverse of beautiful woman, we have a dark-eyed Circe, the ravishingly beautiful bewitching men by the magic of her eyes; a dark-haired, pale-cheeked siren, drawing her victims despite their knowledge of

her wiles; a very Cleopatra in strength, intellect, and hedonism.

"As in the drama, sc in the Sonnets, the chief actors are three in number; the poet is, however, the hero, the friend and the woman are the good and evil angels:

> Two loves I have of comfort and despair.
> Which like two spirits do suggest me still;
> The better angel is a man right fair,
> The worse spirit a woman coloured ill.

"This, then, is the keynote of the whole sequence: the first section (I—CXXVI) is occupied mainly with the 'man right fair,' the second CXXVII—CLII) concerns the "woman colour'd ill to whom passing allusion is evidently made in Sonnets XXX—XXXV, etc.; the poet's picture of his *Campaspe* needed a special section for itself; he gives us no fancy picture, but one evidently drown from life (cp. CXXVII-CZLIV., etc)."

Cruttwell who considers that Shakespeare's Sonnets reflect the deep change of sensibility which marks the later from the earlier Elizabethans has observed in his admirable book, *The Shakespearean Moment*. "The 1590's are the crucial years, in Elizabethan *fin-de siecle* there occurred a change, a shift of thought and feeling, which led directly to the greatest moment in English poetry; the 'Shakespearean moment' the opening years of the seventeenth century, in which were written all the supreme Shakespearean dramas. The 1590's brought about that deep change of sensibility which marks off the later from the earlier Elizabethans, which alters the climate from that of *Arcadia* and *The Faerie Queene* to that which welcomed Hamlet, which probably demanded the Shakespearean rewriting of that drama from its crude original blood and thunder Kyd, and which found its other great poet in the person of Donne. To think of the Elizabethan age as a solid, unchanging unity is utterly misleading. Within it there were two generations and (roughly corresponding to those generations) two mentalities. In the 1590's the one 'handed over' to the other. Such a statement is, of course, hte grossest simplification; in the remains of the mind and the imagination things do not happen as neatly as that. And in fact, the 1590's are intensely confused, precisely because of the 'handing over' to the other. Such a statement is, of course, the greatest simplification; in the realms of the mind and the imagination things do not happen as neatly as that. And in fact the 'handing over' was then taking place; new and old were deeply entangled, and all generalisation must

be loaded with exceptions. But there was an old, and there was a new, and the task of criticism is to analyse and distinguish.

"Of all the poetry then written, none shows better what was really happening than the Sonnets of Shakespeare. They deal with far more than the personal events which make up their outward material; they show an intensely awareness of the currents and cross-currents of the age. They have hardly received the properly critical attention that they deserve; real criticism, it may be, has fought shy of them because of the fatal and futile attraction they have exercised on the noble army of cranks, who are far too busy identifying the young man, the dark lady, the rival poet, and William Shakespeare, to bother about the quality of the poetry. But the Sonnets are, in their own right, and quite apart from external 'problems' poems of great and intriguing interest, as well as of beauty; they are much more subtle and varied than a casual reading reveals. The sweet and unchanging smoothness of their form is extremely deceptive; and it is partly this—the contrast between spirit and form—which makes them, of all the works of 1590's the best adapted to help us to a comprehension of the age's development in poetry. For what they show is a blending of new and old, the new in the old, and in that form they say something completely at odds with the old, and destined to conquer it. On the surface they are fashionable and conventional, for the 1590's was the great age of the sonnet-sequence; below the surface, they are radically original.

"The first impression which a quick, unprejudiced reading of these 154 sonnets must give is that they are not a unity. There is no coherent plot or dominant theme; mood and style vary enormously, the changes are often abrupt and the connections obscure. Within this miscellany can be seen some groups which hold together. The first seventeen, for instance, are all addressed to a beautiful young nobleman, urging him to hurry up and marry in order to perpetuate his beauty in offspring. This is followed by a longer group, still addressed to the young man (or a young man—it might not be the same), announcing that it is in the poet's verse that his beauty will stay immortal. There are indications of a separation and a return, a quarrel and a reconcilement; there is a hint that the relationship has lasted for three years. The young man, as the sequence proceeds, seems to be looked on as a patron no less than as a lover; a rival poet, more successful than the writer at winning the

patron's favour, enters on the scene, together with a good deal of self-depreciation and contempt for his own poetry on the part of the writer. The dark lady makes her appearance; first, it would seem, she was the writer's mistress, then the young man's and by her fickleness she poisons the relation between them. Running through these stories—we can call them that whether we look on them as fiction or autobiography—are other themes, disgust at the dirty job of being a popular playwright and actor, bitterness at growing old, envy of other writers more up-to-date, intellectual, and highbrow, anger and disillusion with the state of society, uneasiness about the writer's own place in it, disgust with the whole business of love and sex.

"Such are the contents. The first decision which has to be made is how we are to take them; as an exercise in fictional sonneteering, such as the Elizabethans produced as from an assembly-line, or as personal and closely autobiographical. The probabilities seem overwhelming in favour of the latter. For one thing, there is the general 'feel' of the poems; then there are the many correspondences between themes in the Sonnets and in the plays of Shakespeare's middle period that is, round about 1600. Moreover, if Shakespeare had set out to make an objective sequence with a fictional story, he would surely have made a far better job of it, have produced something more coherent and clearer, something nearer to *Venus and Adonis* and *The Rape of Lucrece*: and it seems unlikely, since he was by the 1590's fully launched as a writer of plays, that his dramatic faculty would have wanted to express itself in another form: it was busy enough in the theatre. The Sonnets he probably looked on as totally different kind of writing, something outside his professional career, aimed at a different audience. They were, perhaps, part of his early campaign to win recognition in another world from that of the London theatres, in the world of the Court, the aristocracy, and the classical highbrows who tended to despise the popular drama. The two long poems, and *Love's Labour's Lost,* are evidence of this effort; to understand it we must forget our own perception that the supreme glory of the Elizabethan age was the achievement of the London theatres, and remember that in the 1590's and earlier virtually all the forces most likely to impress and attract a young writer, almost all that was socially most glittering and culturally most imposing, regarded those theatres and all they had so far produced with a contempt both social and intellectual."

"If, then, the Sonnets derive from an episode in Shakespeare's life in which he made some sort of contact with the world of elegance and aristocracy, the next problem is to find the nature of that experience. The Sonnets are not a unity; the experience they present was neither simple nor single, but complex and changing. Although there is no evidence at all that the printed arrangement of the poems was Shakespeare's —no evidence, indeed, that there ever was an arrangement— still, one can trace a certain logical development, and the development is from simplicity to complexity.

"The early sonnets—that is, to speak more exactly those which come first in the printed text, though it seems very likely that they were also the earliest—show the simple sensibility of the early Renaissance. There is a vast deal of words to very little matter ; the method is that of constant variations on the same theme. The language is smooth and mellifluous, the imagery clear and unsurprising. Ideas are few, simple, and in a sense artificial; marry and beget children so that your beauty may outlive you, your beauty will survive your death in my verse. There is no need o think that these ideas were held insincerely, but they do come from the common stock of Renaissance poetry; they lack the force of a theme which has a particular value."

"As the sequence proceeds, the texture of the poems, though the subject remains the young man, shows a slow thickening, an increasing complexity. They become much more introspective; the interest is often far more on the writer's general state of mind than on the object of his love or even the love itself. In the 29th, for instance ('When in disgrace with Fortune and men's eyes'), the real concentration of intensity falls on the sense of utter failure that fills the writer's being; the conclusion, which affirms that this failure is redeemed by his love, is weak and unconvincing by comparison. This pattern is followed in many sonnets; often the real weight of the poem, which is thoroughly pessimistic, introspective, and not concerned at all with love, is feebly opposed by the final couplet alone. Of these the most striking is the 66th ('Tir'd with all these, for restful death I cry), in which the long piling Hamlet-like list of the world's iniquities utterly overwhelm the protesting little line at the end—'save that to dye. I leave my Love alone.' In these poems and many more, an all-inclusive self-examination replaces or reinforces the narrow theme of love; self-disgust, self-contempt, self-reproach are the usual tones of this intros-

pection, and even the rare moments of satisfaction are qualified and brushed aside at once:

> Since of selfe-love possesseth al mine eie,
> And al my soule, and al my every part;
> And for this sinne there is no remedie,
> It is so grounded inward in my heart,
> Me thinkes no face so gracious is as mine,
> No shape so true, no truth of such account,
> And for my self mine owne worth do define,
> As I all other in all worths surmount.
> But when my glasse shewes me my selfe indeed
> Beated and chopt with tand antiquitie,
> Mine owne selfe love quite contrary I read;
> Selfe, so selfe loving were iniquity........

Bitterness at the thought of age, as here, is one of the points on which this self-hatred is focussed; but another, more particular, and also, it would seem, more deeply felt, is the conviction of failure as a poet. This is hinted at in some of the early sonnets, as for example in the 32nd:

> If thou survive may well contented daie,
> When that churle death my bones with dust shall cover
> And shalt by fortune once more re-survay
> These poore rude lines of thy deceased Lover;
> And though they be out-stript by every pen,
> Reserve them for my love, not for their rime,
> Exceeded by the height of happier men..........

......but there seems no great bitterness there: it sounds like polite and conventional modesty, and just where the failure lies is not yet defined. It is defined later, with great and bitter precision, stimulated, it seems, by the coming of the more successful rival. His own verse has got into a rut; it is now old fashioned and monotonous:

> Why write I still all one, ever the same,
> And keepe invention in a noted weed,
> That every word doth almost tel my name,
> Shewing their birth, and where they did proceed ?—(76)

The 78th particularises further; the failure is seen as a lack of artistic grace and a deficiency in learning:

> In other workas thou doost but mend the stile,
> And Arts with thy sweetee graces graced be.
> But thou art all my art, and doost advance,
> As high as learning, my rude ignorance.

"The poems as they proceed, then, move away from a simple and single contemplation and adoration of the young

Adonis. They widen in scope, till every interest of the writer's life is brought within their reach : his dreams of social failure, the problems and rivalries of the career as an author, his perceptions of the evils and injustices in society, his private anguish at growing old and his private fear of death. The young man is still the centre, but he too is involved in the growing complexity. For now he is looked on with a critical eye, as a fallible individual and not as a symbol that cannot be questioned. The obsequious adoration which some of the sonnets award him—'may soverayne', 'your servant', 'your slave', 'your vassal'—is qualified by hints of rebuke:

> No more bee greev'd at that which thou hast done,
> Roses have thornes, and silver fountains mud,
> Cloudes and eclipses staine both Moone and Sunne,
> And loathesome canker lives in sweetest bud.—(35)

A contrast is felt between his outward beauty and inward corruption:

> O what a Mansion have those vices got
> Which for their habitation chose out thee.—(95)

And now he is looked at through the eyes of others:

> That tongue that tells the story of thy daies,
> (Making lascivious comments on thy sport)
> Cannot dispraise, but in a kinde of praise,
> Naming thy name, blesses an ill report.—(95)

He is, as it were, becoming dramatised: seen in the round, seen and felt as a real human being, in the context of society and under the scrutiny of an observant though still loving mind.

"When the dark lady makes her delayed but most effective entry (she does not effectively appear till the 127th Sonnet.... one would almost think that Shakespeare's theatrical cunning had something to do with it), the process we have already traced continues, at a faster tempo and with ever increasing intensity. These sonnets which deal with the lady (127 to 152) contain most of the greatness and most of the maturity in the whole sequence; they can be taken as a single poem, in the way in which (for instance) Donne's nineteen *Holy Sonnets* are a single poem. The lady is depicted with a familiar equality, a bitter and bawdy ferocity, such as are accorded to the young man even at his naughtiest. His goings on are excused and even admired; hers are neither. Her promiscuity is described in language of tough and 'unpoetic' realism; and this too the young man never receives:

If eyes corrupt by over-partiall lookes.
Be anchord in the baye where all men ride,
Why of eyes falsehood hast thou forged bookes,
Whereto the judgement of my heart is tide?
Why should my heart thinke that a severall plot,
Which my heart knowes the wide worlds common place ?—(137)

The first of these images has an indecent pun on 'ride', one of the commonest of Elizabethan verbs for describing male sexual activity (the jestings of the Frenchmen, before Agincourt, about the Dauphin's horse, for example); the last is derived from the contemporary enclosures of common land (severall plot' meaning 'privately-owned piece of land'), and its play with the sexual meaning of the world ('promiscuous') who was also a favourite Elizabethan jest. The language when the lady is the subject, comes much nearer to that of common speech—and of the drama—and much farther from the lyrically 'poetical', than when the young man is dealt with.

"From this perception that the lady is a whore, come a moral tone far fiercer and deeper, and a self-examination more searching, than anything before. There is not only the famous 129th Sonnet on lust, there is also the 146th, which is one of the very few passages in Shakespeare explicitly and traditionally theological, in its conflict between body and soul ('poore soul the centre of my sinful earth'), its advice to the soul to thrive by denying the body, and its Donne-like ending;

So shalt thou feed on death, that feeds on men,
And death once dead, there is no more dying then

—which is very close to the last line of Donne's tenth Holy Sonnet:

And death shall be noe more ; death, thou shalt dye.

"Of these sonnets' introspection, the dominant theme is that of a self-divided personality, of a love which exists in spite of the judgment of reason in spite of a moral preception of its wrongness and of its object's worthlessness, even in spite of the senses' recognition that he is not particularly beautiful. Others do not find her so, and the others are probably right:

If that be faire whereon my false eyes dote,
What means the world to say 't is not so ;
If it be not, then love doth well denote.
Loves eye is not so true as all mens............—(148)

There is an utter disintegration of the personality: senses, wits, and heart are at strife ('but my five wits, nor my five senses can Diswade one foolish heart from serving thee) ; the whole

self is at odds with the love which it cannot resist ('when I against my self with thee partake'). It is not only self-division; it is also a perverted craving for self-deception, a deception that does not deceive. He asks to be cheated; but of course the mere asking implies that the cheat is already detected:

> If I might teach thee witte better it were,
> Though not to love, yet love to tell me so,
> As testie sick men when their deaths be neere,
> No newes but health from their Phisitions know.—(140)

Behind this is a conviction that the whole relationship is wrong, is false in itself and founded on falsehood—in the sonnets devoted to the lady, the words 'false' and 'falsehood' occur nine times, 'life' or 'belied' six times—and if all is false, then why should the parts be true? This comes to a climax in what is perhaps the most terrible poem of the whole sequence, the 138th; the most terrible, and also the nakedest, since it confesses things that are not easily confessed:

> When my love swears that she is made of truth,
> I do believe her though I know she lyes,
> That she might thinke me some untutord youth,
> Unlearned in the world's false subtilities.
> Thus vainly thinking that she thinkes me young,
> Although she knows my dayes are past the best,
> Simply I credit her false speaking tongue :
> On both sides thus is simple truth supprest :
> But wherefore sayes she not she is unjust ?
> And wherefore say not I that I am old ?
> O loves best habit is in seeming trust,
> And age in love, loves not t' have yeares told.
> Therefore I lye with her, and she with me,
> And in our faults by lyes we flattered be.

"Of this climatic poem the last couplet, with its pun on 'lye', is the very apex. The pun's grim seriousness is quite in the mature Shakespearean manner, like the remarkable triple pun in *The Winter's Tale*—Leontes raving with jealousy to his son :

> Goe play (Boy) play : thy Mother playes, and I
> Play too ; but so disgrac'd a part, whose issue
> Will hisse met t' my grave

—in which *play* means, first, the innocent childish play of the boy ; next the adulterous sexual sport of the wife ; finally the playing of an actor, in the shameful role of the cuckold. The pun in the sonnet forces together the physical union and its context, as it were, its whole surrounding universe, of moral

defilement and falsehood. It says, in fact, what the opening of the 129th Sonnet says:

> The expence of Spirit in a waste of shame
> Is lust in action........

and it says with the same union of moral power and physical precision. 'The expence of Spirit', for the modern reader, has only emotional force ; it is in fact a piece of contemporary sexual physiology. From the heart to the sexual organs was believed to go a vein bearing in it the 'spirit generative'. 'Expence' means 'expenditure' : what the phrase refers to is the loss of the 'spirit generative, in the act of sex.

"This love that is known to be wrong, and is yet persisted in, leads at last to a total reversal of the moral order. Good becomes bad in this love, and bad becomes good: 'When all my *best* doth worship thy *defect*—that is, my mind *thy worst* all *best* exceeds.' 'Fair' is equivocated against 'foul' 'bright' against 'black':

> Or mine eyes seeing this, say this is not
> To put faire truth upon so foule a face—(137)

—which reminds one of the way in which the witches of *Macbeth* juggle and equivocate 'fair' against 'foul'; and there to the meaning is that the moral order is reversed. Clearest of all is the final couplet of 150:

> If thy unworthiness raised love in me,
> More worthy I to be belov'd of thee

—he has loved her for her unworthiness; this in turn has infected him, has made him unworthy and hence his unworthiness makes him 'worthy' of her.

"The sonnet which follows this (151) shows a slight change of tone, a relaxing of the moral struggle; it reads like a resigned sardonic acceptance of the utter wrongness of the whole business. It admits, in terms unusually religious for Shakespeare, that his love is betraying his soul.

> For thou betraying me, I doe betray
> My nobler part to my gross bodies treason

but the phrases addressed to her—'gentle cheater', 'sweet selfe'—have an air of tired and tolerant affection. Two rogues together, might as well have some fun. And the rest of the sonnet carries on in that spirit with an almost cheerful obscenity, with an elaborate and thoroughly Donne-like conceit on male sexuality ; the final couplet:

No want of conscience hold it that I call
Her love, for whose deare love I rise and fall

is exactly in the manner of the lines in Donne's nineteenth Elegie:

We easily know
By this these Angels from an evil sprite,
Those set our hairs, but these our flesh upright.

"We have come a long way from the lyrical idealism of the opening sonnet:

From fayrest creatures we desire increase
That thereby beautie's Rose might never dye

—to reach a poem as complex as this, which in fourteen lines can range from religious solemnity to bawdy mockery. We have come in fact, from Spenser to Donne.

"The sonnets then, give us the perfect text through which to see what really happened to the minds of men in this crucial decade, and especially to the poetry which expressed these happenings. We may well feel inclined to shrink from the 'subjective' reading of the sonnets, which sees them as the record of crisis (or a crisis, at least) in their author's personal life, when we remember the sentimental extravaganzas, such a reading has so often given rise to—and always will, for the Frank Harrises and Ivor Browns will always be with us; but it does seem justifiable to a degree which would not be permissible in a reading of the plays. Justifiable, but inadequate: for the Sonnets record much else. Perhaps this is always the case with any writer whose life and work are unified: the crisis was all-involving. It was personal and emotional; it was social, and touched its victim's professional career and his attitude towards his career: it involved his art, and drove him, both as a result of it and in order to express it, into a change of style and it was his own mincrocosmic reproduction of the change and crisis of the time. It brought him towards a new relationship with his medium, the language, and a new use of it; that use remains, in essentials, permanent—the methods of his maturity. The Sonnets are a sort of embryo, in which the essential evolution of the whole of Shakespeare is carried out in miniature."

23. A GENERAL ESTIMATE OF SHAKESPEARE.

Shakespeare is now considered by general agreement as the best poet and dramatist of England, and by some critics he is given the highest place in the field of world literature. Whoever reads his plays cannot but be impressed by their singular

excellence. In this connection Drinkwater has observed: "When to-day we examine his plays, however untutored we may be, we examine them not as they came from his pen, but as they come to us tried and tried again in the critical fires of three hundred years. They are too lovely, too admirable, to be accepted on hearsay, and so we study them for ourselves with what freshness of mind we may. And always we find ourselves confirming the judgment of the ages. Here is a body of work that not only in creative power but in sustained excellence of workmanship is the best that has been done, by a race rightly proud of its theatre and its poetry. It is pleasant, in a world of conflicting ideas, to have one thing at least about which every body is agreed."

Shakespeare's superiority to all other English writers lies in the fact that he has united the powers and advantages of three great forms: the romance, pure poetry and drama. In this connection Saintsbury has remarked: "What establishes the greatness of Shakespeare is the substance of Shakespeare's work.....In the study of Shakespeare the important thing is to get the Shakespearean atmosphere, to feel the breath of Shakespearean spirit. The more thoroughly and impartially this spirit is observed and extracted, the more will it be found to consist in the subjection of all things to what may be called the romantic process of presenting them in an atmosphere of poetical suggestion rather than as sharply defined and logically stated. But this romantic process is itself characterised and pervaded by a philosophical depth and width of conception of life which is not usually associated with romance. And it is enlivened and made actual by the dramatic form which whether by separable or inseparable accident, the writer has adopted. Thus Shakespeare—as no one has done before him, and as people have done since far more often in imitation of him than independently—unites the powers and advantages of three great forms: the romance (in verse or prose), pure poetry and the drama. This first gives him variety, elasticity, freedom from constraint and limit. The second enables him to transport. The third at once preserves his presentations from the excessive vagueness and vastness which non-dramatic romance invites, and helps him to communicate actuality and vividness."

The great distinction of Shakespeare's genius was its virtually including the genius of all the great writers of his age. He was a past master in the art of characterisation. His characters are real beings of flesh and blood; they speak like real

men, not like authors. His plays, moreover, are properly expressions of passions not descriptions of them. In fact passion in Shakespeare is of the same nature as the delineation of character. It is passion modified by all the other feelings to which the individual is liable. His imagination is of the same plastic kind as his conception of character or passion. 'It glances from heaven to earth, from earth to heaven.' Its movement is rapid and devious. It unites the most opposite extremes; or, as Puck says, in boasting of his own feats, 'puts a girdle round the earth in forty minutes.' His language and versification are like the rest of him. He has a magic power over words: 'they come winged at his bidding; and seem to know their places.'

Shakespeare, as Ben Jonson remarked, 'was not of an age but for all time.' In this connection, Spencer writes in his book, *Shakespeare and the Nature of Man*: "Since art, as Aristotle says, is an imitation of life, the individual artist is necessarily compelled to imitate the life of his own period and it is clear enough that certain periods are more favourable to good art than others. It is also clear that there are different kinds of imitation, even in the same period, and that a writer like Ben Jonson, who is concerned with the surface of experience, who describes social vice rather than spiritual evil, whose characters, unlike Shakespeare's, never look inward or experience an inner division—it is clear that a writer like Jonson will give us a different picture of his period from that of a man who probes more deeply and resolves more conflicts. It is not with Ben Jonson, or others like him—admirable in their own sphere though they may be—that Shakespeare should be compared. He should rather be compared with those writers, and they are not many, who used the views of their time to see human nature in its broadest terms, and whose imitation of life is an imitation not only of man in relation to society, but also in relation to himself and to the larger forces by which he feels himself controlled.

"Shakespeare was in touch with something more than his age, and if we are to arrive at a final view of his work as a whole, we must see it as a reflection of deeper truths than any that can be described by the writings. Matthew Arnold left Shakespeare so pointedly alone. ''t's good', was the memorable reply. 'He is too terrifying; he frightens me.' That was the reply of one who felt Shakespeare more deeply than many who affect familiarity with him; for it is the reply of a man who knows the essential truth about Shakespeare: that he

is like life itself, he is life itself. The man who pretends to be on familiar terms with life knows nothing about it. He lives in a dream, which may seem to him as solid as the four walls of the house in which he dreams it, but is yet a dream. No one knows life unless he has been terrified by it, and unless the possibility of being terrified by it remains for ever in his soul. And to be terrified by life, in this fundamental sense, is not to be terrified merely by the menace of personal catastrophes which await alike the wary and the unwary but by the joys and beauties of life also: to have known what it is to feel the fact of birth as far more awful than the fact of death; for death is a mystery, but the mystery and terror of life each man must discover for himself and by himself alone.

"All things lead to a mystery. To realise that this is the truth of life is to be terrified. And this terrifying truth of life is in Shakespeare as it is in no other of the world's greatest books. It is not that Shakespeare expressed that truth with his conscious mind—though there indubitably was a moment when he did apprehend it in full consciousness, and sought to express the mystery which then overwhelmed him—but that he pre-eminently embodied that truth. Nature uttered itself in him and came to self-awareness in him. When Shakespeare becomes conscious of his own mystery, the breath of our soul is withheld, for Nature itself seems to pause, to hesitate, to become bewildered and afraid. One feels that it is not a man that asks these unanswerable questions, nor into man's eyes that comes the sudden glint of apprehension and anguish when Hamlet shrugs his shoulders: 'Thou wouldst not think how it all's here about my heart; but it is no matter'. It is the wind of life that has dropped in the sails of the splendid ship, and yet the ship moves on.

"At such a moment we feel it is not a man who hesitates, but Man; and Man in the sense of Goethe's saying, that 'Man is the first speech that Nature holds with God'. In Shakespeare we seem to watch Nature involved in her destiny of self-discovery; and since this is a process which cannot be watched, we ourselves are caught in it. The moment comes in our local and temporary picture of the cosmos, of psychology, or of the state. Beneath any view of man's nature, at the very basis of human experience, are the elementary facts of birth, or life and of death. The rhythm of their sequence and renewal lies behind all our knowledge and emotions, and it is the rhythm that we share with all of living nature, with animals and grass. The

earliest known religions are based on it, and so is the earliest literature. Birth, struggle, death, and that which is beyond death—these, as Gilbert Murray says, are the subjects of that primitive dance and song 'which is the fountainhead of ancient classical poetry.' They have been the essential subjects of all great literature ever since as they were the subject of morality plays which were so important a part of Shakespeare's technical background. And if we think of Shakespeare's work in relation to this essential pattern, this fundamental rhythm we shall have, perhaps, a view of the sequence of his plays that will both underlie and transcend any view that we can obtain by thinking of his work merely in relation to the ideas of his time. 'Shakespeare,'said Keats, 'led a life of allegory, his works are the comment of it'; and we may interpret this somewhat puzzling remark by remembering that Shakespeare's career was divided into three stages: a period of experiment and adaptation, a period of tragic vision, and a period of affirmation. Birth, struggle, death, and renewal; these are not only the themes of the individual final plays, they are the themes which describe the course of Shakespeare's work as a whole, from his earliest plays through *King Lear* to *The Tempest*. Such, we may say—as we think of art and life together, so that historical description and technical analysis merge into an understanding of the symbolism of all men's lives—such was the allegory of Shakespeare's life; to have illustrated in his work more richly than any other writer, that rhythm, that sequence, that vision, which all human beings must recognise and accept as fundamental to the nature of man."

Shakespeare is as deep and many-sided as life, and thus it requires great courage to face and understand him. In fact the only way to know him is to completely submit to his overwhelming power. In this connection, Middleton Murray has rightly observed: "In the end there is nothing but to surrender to Shakespeare. Milton and Keats are typical of the possibilities of a complete reaction to him. Either we must move away from him to remain ourselves; or we must let the wave go over us, and risk annihilation. I once asked one of the famous modern critic-poets why, in his experience of Shakespeare when we are dimly conscious of a choice to be made: either we must turn away (whether by leaving him in silence, or by substituting for his reality some comfortable intellectual fiction of our own), or we must suffer ourselves to be drawn into the vortex. To

enter that vortex is to plunge into chaos: a chaos of the world of order and of moral law in which men long to believe."

Giving a general estimate of Shakespeare, Legouis has observed in *A History of English Literature*: "Much has been said of Shakespeare's philosophy. So many reflections on life occur in his plays as to produce the illusion that he was endowed with superior wisdom. It is tempting to imagine that the collection of the scattered fragments of his thought would constitute a body of doctrine which would yield an answer, his answer, to the riddles of life.

"In truth, no Shakespearean system exists; this philosophy vanishes if we seek to grasp it. Its numerous contradictions soon become apparent, and its incoherence, which is no less than that of reality. They escape disappointment who hold that had the poet had a message to deliver he would have placed it in his non-dramatic work, more especially his sonnets, and that he hid nothing of the sort. There is nothing in Shakespeare philosophy which is distinctive or carries conviction. The miracle is not in the abstract though his works contain, but in that extraordinary pliability which let him put the most divergent, most striking and most ingenious arguments in the mouths of his characters in support of their passions or interests. Each of them, from the kings to the clowns, has indeed a philosophy which he makes singularly clear. Each judges life in his own way, from his own angle, whence he may utter a remark strikingly true, and profound also in many instances. But all this is the emanation of vigorous dramatic genius. These scattered reflections evoked by circumstances and deliberately self-contradictory derive strength from their appropriateness, and are penetrating by the feeling of which they are born, as they are beautiful by the poetry of the words which clothe them. But it is vain to hope by gathering them together, to arrive at a higher wisdom which was the poet's. They are not maxims accumulating to produce a total result. Their number is commensurate only with the diversity of human judgments and reveals only the playwright's marvellous versatility and his consciousness of the relative nature of all things.

"Hence philosophies constructed from the ideas scattered through the plays have been frail and mutually contradictory. Protestants, Catholics, and free thinkers have with equally plausible arguments claimed Shakespeare for their own. He enunciates principles akin to those proverbs and popular

sayings, all equally striking, all true within their limits which contradict each other; one of them can often be matched by its exact contrary. Hamlet, discouraged by the something rotton in the state of Denmark has cause to hesitate exactly as Henry V, seeing 'some soul of goodness in things evli', has reasons for acting, finds that the very obstacles in his path are motives for action and hope. Each temperament and every circumstance has in the plays its appropriate philosophy. No higher doctrine embraces and resumes them all.

"Nevertheless the deduction is allowable that the playwright's thought rarely went beyond earthly life, that if he sometimes glanced further, he soon brought back his gaze to this world which seemed to him man's all. He does indeed admit with Hamlet that human reason is limited and surrounded by a great mystery.

> There are more things in heaven and earth Horatio,
> Than are dreamt of in your philosophy.

Yet Hamlet himself says, 'To die; to sleep; nor more', for all that he keeps

> the dread of something after death,
> The undiscovered country from whose bourn
> No traveller returns

Other characters in the plays make more decided denials. It may mean nothing that Macbeth, the murderer, thinks,

> Life's but a walking shadow, a poor player
> That strute and trets his hour upon the stage
> And then is heard no more ; it is a tale
> Told by an idiot, full of sound and fury,
> Signifying nothing.

It may mean no more that Jaques, the melancholy philosopher, believes

> All is ten o'clock :
> Thus may we see, quoth he, how the world wags ;
> 'Tis but an hour ago since it was nine
> After one hour more 'twill be eleven ;
> And so from hour to hour, we ripe and ripe,
> And then from hour to hour, we rot and rot ;
> And thereby hangs a tale ..

"It is, however, difficult to think that Prospero did not voice the poet's mature opinion when, reflectively, he averred that:

> We are such stuff
> As dreams are made on, and our little life
> Is rounded with a sleep.

"This is to speak as a philosopher of antiquity rather than a Christian. Yet the saying was not such as to scandalize an audience of the Renaissance or to mark Shakespeare plays as more impious than those of his contemporaries. Marlowe had written more audacious lines. Shakespeare did no more than find rare and unforgettable forms in which to enclose the secular thinking of the men of his time.

"Shakespeare's personality which he deliberately effaced behind his work and made subservient to the conditions of the stage, asserted itself irrepressibly in the form of his plays, his style, and his versification. There all the wealth of his gifts found vent. Marked though the characteristics of the period be, the form of his work is unique and incomparable, impaired by faults as brilliant as the colours in a pheasant's plumage. He was afflicted by all the diseases of style proper to his age, one after another, as well as by its happy bravery, and he blended them in a style entirely his own, which transforms its constituent elements and harmonizes disparities as numerous as though they had been assembled in each play in fulfilment of a wager.

"His dramatic gift alone would have secured his immediate popularity, but would hardly have ensured his glory. The first of dramatist was also the first poet of his day and one of the first of all time. The poet is not only revealed by the hundred exquisite songs with which the plays are strewn. The ardent passion for beauty which is the distinction of the sonnets and causes the best of them to reach the high water mark of beauty in English poetry, attains in the plays to result as fine, and there has a diversity of mood and accent impossible to the sonnets with their monotonous theme and form.

"Most often the fusion of dramatic and lyric elements is perfect, absolute and beyond analysis. A whole scene is lifted to a higher mood while the proportions of its constituent elements are unmodified, and thus the pleasure of truth, which is retained and added pleasure of beauty, are blended in strict unity.

"Beauty comes of the perfection of the style and the versification, the variety of the images and the accompanying music. No purely lyrical poetry in English weds words or metaphors more triumphantly or contains more varied, richer, or more delicate sonorities than those which Shakespeare spontaneously and inexhaustibly produces in the blank verse of

his plays. Yet the pleasure of an emotion properly dramatic is nearly always added to the pleasure of lyricism, which therefore is saved from the egoisted dilettantism fatal to enchantment. A special glory belongs to the poet who, without sacrifice of probability, inspires other hearts than his own with the highest lyrical emotions and causes other lips to utter them, while at the same time he follows or urges on the progress of the action which decides the fate of his puppets.

"In the capital scenes of the great tragedies—the dialogues of Romeo and Juliet, Hamlet's soliloquies, the scene of the awakening of Othello's jealousy, of Lear's passionate railings, or of Macbeth's hallucinations—this poetic prestige overlies a pathos which could exist without this splendour but is transfigured by it. All the translations have allowed this supreme enchantment to escape, and give, therefore only an incomplete comprehension of the total effect. When Iago sees Othello already ravaged by the jealousy he has put in him, coming towards him, and says

> Not poppy, nor mandragors,
> Nor all the drowsy syrups of the world
> Shall ever medicine thee to that sweet sleep
> Which thou ow'dst yesterday.,

something infused in the beauty of the rhythm and the syllables transforms Iago into an infernal magician. He has been a vile rascal; he becomes a demon.

"The defects of this rich genius for words are almost as glaring as its qualities are dazzling. There is on every occasion such a multitudinous flow of words and images to Shakespeare's mind as nothing seems able to dam. Ben Jonson, noticing this irrepressible impetuosity, regretted that it could not be checked. Images gush forth, beautiful, or strange, but without order, redundant and sometimes injurious to dramatic probability. Old John of Gaunt at his last gasp, breathes out his love for England, in mutiplied, piled-up similies, interrupted, resumed inexhaustible. His tirade would weary the lungs of a strong young man. The wounded soldier who relates to Duncan Macbeth victory over the rebels heaps frenzied metaphors on to emphatic similies. Even more often the poet yields to the temptation to be subtle. He plunges into subtlety confidently, sure that he can find a way out of the labyrinth. In the sonnets when he is speaking in his own person, he uses and misuses subtlety immoderately. His narrative poems are full

of it and it is the very web of the unending lamentations of Lucrece, Tarquin's victim. Almost all his characters, whether tragic or comic, show unexpectedly a taste for the like quintessence of wit, a joy in splitting the fine hairs. The young queen, wife to Richard II (Act II scene ii) when she is uneasy about her husband's absence, involves herself with a courtier who seeks to dispel her anxiety in the maziest of arguments about her presentiment of evil. The most subtle sonneteer would find it difficult to follow the slender threads of these highly abstract analysis in which the play of verbal antithesis is so fine-drawn that even a slow reading hardly discovers its clues. However keen our perceptions may be, we have little chance of unravelling the almost invisible threads of such a skein while we are listening to a play. Shakespeare has become a wit rather than a poet, and like a tight-rope walker, is carried away by pleasure in his own agility. Not all his experience of the theatre can defeat his joy in overcoming difficulties.

"This lack of moderation is the limitation of his dramatic genius and his realism. It brings on to the stage a superfluity of lyricism both ill-timed and out of place. It endows the most divergent characters, even the dull and the foolish, with an improbable command of language and power of analysis.

"In part the defect is to be ascribed to the age, but it is mainly due to Shakespeare himself. In fact it is probably true that except the fuliginous Champman, lost in metaphor and drowned in subtleties, Shakespeare has a more difficult style than any other Elizabethan dramatist. Marlowe's eloquence, Jonson's vigorous realism, Dekker's easy grace, Middleton's dry precision, Fletcher's rather superficial distinction, and Massingers' oratorical swing make their plays more lucid than his, leave fewer difficulties to be solved and knots to be untied. Although in many passages, and nearly always in the most beautiful, Shakespeare shows himself capable of complete clarity and frank simplicity, he yet had a personal taste for a twisted, slightly enigmatic mode of expression, for variants on the current uses of speech, and the hearer and even the reader must consequently exert ingenuity to understand him. This habit of mind, usually dropped when a play reaches its intensest moments is especially manifest in secondary scenes in which the dramatic instinct does not restrain him. It expressed a natural tendency which needed to be controlled and repressed by a superior necessity of the action of the play.

"We have shown more or less clearly the link which joins Shakespeare to his contemporaries, how he was like them and how he surpassed them. The study has been much too limited for a poet who in Jonson's words, was not of an age but for all time. So astonishingly widespread is his glory that it might also be said that 'he was not of a land, but of all lands'. We ought to notice certain other characteristics which distinguish him from his English rivals less than they place him in opposition to the classical drama. The most important of all is the frequent complexity of his characters which, as a rule, are not represented only within the short span of crisis. Shakespeare took advantage of the wide allowance of space under his dramatic system, the twenty or so scenes into which each of his play is, on an average, divided, and showed his heroes at various moments of their lives, in changing situations and a colloquy with different persons. They are not obliged to sustain one attitude but have time to move and alter. No simple principle accounts for them. They have life and life's indefiniteness, and therefore they are not always fully intelligible but are mysteries. It is even possible to ask whether Shakespeare himself understood them all. Had he an analytical comprehension of Hamlet? The watchmaker understands the watch he has made but it is a wise father that knows his own child. Thus it is that many Shakespearian beings, whose reality cannot for an instant be questioned, do not admit of too precise investigation or are differently interpreted by different critics. But even as they evolve and their complexity increases, an art of which the secret escapes us, preserved the illusion of their identity through all their changes.

"Another great charcteristic of Shakespeare's genius is an undefinable alertness and mobility which keep attention on the stretch. His prodigious vitality remains unimpaired after three centuries. It seems to grow every time he is read. Something of the mystery belongs to him which Enobarbus noticed in Cleopatra's charm:

> Age cannot wither her, nor custom stale
> Her infinite variety ; other women cloy
> The appetites they feed ; but she makes hungry
> Where most she satisfies.

"There is no other work, however beautiful, that does not seem monotonous after Shakespeare. Free of every theory, accepting all of life, reflecting nothing, uniting the real and the poetic, appealing to the most various men, to a rude workman

as to wit, Shakespeare's drama, is a great river of life and beauty. All who thirst for art or truth, the comic or the tender, ecstasy or satire, light or shade, can stoop to drink from its waters, and at almost every instant, of their changing moods find the one drop to slake their thirst."

We close this essay with Matthew Arnold's famous sonnet on Shakespeare, which is one of the best tributes paid to this 'myriad minded' genius:

> Others abide our question—thou art free !
> We ask and ask—Thou smilest and art still,
> Out-topping knowledge ! So some sovran hill
> Who to the stars uncrowns his majesty,
> Planting his steadfast footsteps in the sea,
> Making the heaven of heavens his dwelling-place,
> Spares but the border, often, of his base
> To the foil'd searching of mortality ;
> And thou, whose head did stars and sunbeams know,
> Self-school'd self-scann'd, self-honour'd, self-secure,
> Didst walk on earth unguess'd at,—Better so !
> All pains the immortal spirit must endure,
> All weakness which impairs, all griefs which bow,
> Find their sole voice in that victorious brow.

UNIVERSITY QUESTIONS

The questions given below have been taken from the question papers of the various universities of India, set for the M.A. and B.A. examinations during the past ten years. They have been arranged under topics dealt separately in the monograph:—

1. Shakespeare the Man.

1. What inference can you draw about Shakespeare the man from his plays?
2. If you were to write a Life of Shakespeare, where would you look for your material, and how you differentiate between conjectures and facts?
3. How far does a careful study of Shakespeare's plays help us to refute the assumption that he was 'an ill-educated butcher boy—all but destitute of polished accomplishment'?

2. Shakespeare's Philosophy.

1. What have you been able to gather about Shakespeare's view of the other world from your study of Shakespeare ?
2. 'Shakespeare's plays preach no philosophy.' Discuss.
3. Write a note on Shakespeare's philosophy.

3. Shakespeare the Poet.

1. Write a note on Shakespeare the Poet.
2. 'Shakespeare was a poet before he was a dramatist.' Discuss and illustrate.

4. Shakespeare's Versification.

1. From a consideration of the plays of Shakespeare show that he was 'making finer and more intricate the texture of his blank verse, originating fresh dramatic types.'
2. Write a note on the blank verse of Shakespeare.

5. Shakespeare and Music.

1. Write a short essay on Shakespeare's use of music and songs in his play.
2. Write a note on 'Shakespeare and Music.'

6. Shakespeare's Imagery.

1. Recent critics have discovered in Shakespeare's imagery a more important function and significance than 'illuminative' or 'decorative'. What are your views of the matter?

7. Shakespeare's Use of Prose.

1. What are your views about Shakespeare's use of prose?

8. Shakespeare's Dramatic Career.

1. It is usual to regard the early plays of Shakespeare as the work of his period of apprenticeship. Who were his masters, and what did he learn from them?
2. 'The transition from the tragedies to the romances is not an evolution but a revolution.' Do you agree with this view?
3. Assess the debt of Shakespeare to his predecessors.
4. Which play do you consider the turning point in his dramatic career and why?

9. Shakespeare's Comedies.

1. How far is it true that all the elements of Shakespeare's comedy are to be found in the works of his predecessors?
2. 'In the comedies Shakespeare is a poetic humorist rather than a creator of comedy proper.' Discuss.
3. What are the characteristics of the later Romantic comedies of Shakespeare? What is their dramatic nature and their view of life?
4. 'All lectures on Shakespeare's comedies tend to become lectures on Shakespeare's women.' Discuss.
5. Write a note on Shakespearean comedy.

10. Shakespeare's Tragdies.

1. 'Shakespeare,' said Stoll, 'is the greatest of dramatists, because the illusion he offers is the widest and highest, the emotion he arouses the most irresisitible and overwhelming.' Discuss this statement with reference to the tragedies of Shakespeare.
2. 'There is no Christian dogma, no poetic justice, no reconciliation of the ways of God to man in Shakespeare's conception of tragedy.' Discuss.

3. Discuss about the tragedies of Shakespeare: 'What we witness is not the passion and doom of mere individuals. The forces that meet in the tragedy stretch far beyond the little group of figures and the tract of space and time in which they appear.'
4. 'Tragedy is an imitation of an action that is serious, complete and of a certain magnitude.' Is this an adequate description of Shakespeare's tragedy?
5. Write a short essay on 'poetic justice' in Shakespearean tragedy.
6. 'Kyd was Shakespeare's tutor in the construction of tragic plot.' Discuss and illustrate.
7. Compare the Aristotelian and Shakespearean conceptions of tragedy. Illustrate your answer.
8. Write an essay on Destiny as dramatic motive in Shakespearean tragedy.
9. 'In his tragedies Shakespeare is aware both of Fate and of responsibility.' Discuss.
10. 'The idea of poetic justice is absent from Shakespeare's tragic picture of life.' Discuss.
11. The first essential, the life and soul, so to speak, of the tragedy is the plot; character comes second. Is this true of Shakespeare's tragedies?
12. Write a note on comic relief in Shakespeare's tragedies.
13. What did Shakespeare learn from Marlowe?

11. Shakespeare's Historical Plays.

1. Consider the historical plays of Shakespeare in the light of the remark that 'they form one historical heroic poem in the dramatic form, of which the separate plays constitute the rhapsodies.'
2. Schlegel says of the historical plays of Shakespeare that 'this mirror of kings should be the manual of young princes.' Why?
3. Discuss the political philosophy of Shakespeare's historical plays, and examine the statement that Shakespeare's reading of history is too aristocratic.
4. Write a note on Shakespeare's treatment of history.

12. Shakespeare's Theatre and His Audience.

1. Estimate the effect of his fellow actors on Shakespeare's work.
2. 'Shakespeare's theatre was more akin to a circus in kind than to the play-house with which we are familiar.' Support this view by consideration of the technique of the plays of Shakespeare.
3. Write a brief note on Elizabethan audience.
4. Write a note on Shakespeare's sense of the stage.
5. To what extent was Shakespeare's dramatic art influenced by the taste of his audience.
6. 'Shakespeare's plays suffered because they were written for the theatre.' Discuss.
7. Write a note on the influence of Elizabethan stage conditions on Shakespeare's technique.

13. Shakespeare's Relation with His Age.

1. How far do Shakespeare's plays help us in reconstructing the social and political conditions of Elizabethan England?
2. 'At last it has seemed but common sense to return to Shakespeare as a playwright and even, for a fresh start, to Shakespeare as Elizabethan playwright.' Discuss and illustrate.
3. "Shakespeare may be for all time, he was also very much of an age.' Discuss.
4. In what way was Shakespeare affected by the world that he lived in, and the stage that he wrote for?

14. Shakespearean Criticism.

1. How has modern criticism advanced our knowledge of Shakespeare's life and times?
2. Summarise briefly the main trends of Shakespeare's criticism in the 20th century.
3. Describe the main changes in the study of Shakespeare which have been revealed from the criticism of the 20th century.
4. 'Every age from Dryden until to-day has had its own evaluation and interpretation of Shakespeare.' Illustrate.
5. Write a short essay on Shakespearean criticism in the 19th century and examine the statement that Coleridge's criti-

cism of *Hamlet* set the tone for a century of Shakespearean criticism.

6. Comment briefly on the development of Shakespearean criticism.
7. Give a brief account of the more important recent attempts to appraise Shakespeare's mind and art.

15. The Textual Problems of Shakespeare's Plays.

1. Write a note on the textual problems of Shakespeare's plays.
2. What do you know of Shakespeare's fight with the 'Pirates'?

16. Shakespeare's Characterisation.

1. What types of womanhood may be distinguished in Shakespeare's plays?
2. In what special manner does Shakespeare's portrayal of women in the comedies differ from that in the last plays? Illustrate.
3. If the heroines of Shakespeare met in company, how would you differentiate them?
4. Write a short essay on Shakespeare's good and bad women.

17. Shakespeare as a Dramatic Artist.

1. Discuss Goethe's contention that Shakespeare regarded his drama as a lively and changing scene, which was to pass rapidly before the eye and the ear, and that his only interest was to be effective and significant for the moment.
2. Comment on Johnson's verdict that Shakespeare 'has scenes of undoubted and perpetual excellence, but perhaps not one play which, if it were now exhibited as the work of a contemporary would be heard to the conclusion.
3. 'The greatest of dramatists is careful, not so much for the single character, as for the drama; indeed, he observes not so much the probabilities of the action of the psychology of the characters as the psychology of the audience, for whom both action and character are formed.' Discuss
4. Write an essay on the fusion of main and sub-plots in Shakespeare's plays.
5. Write a note on the art of Shakespeare's opening scenes.

18. Shakespeare's Use of Soliloquy.

1. Discuss Shakespeare's use of Soliloquy.

19. Shakespeare's Humour.

1. Write a note on Shakespeare's humour.
2. What are the varieties of Shakespeare's humour? What is it that gives them an individual tinge?

20. The Fool in Shakespeare.

1. Write an essay on the evolution of the Fool in Shakespeare's drama.
2. Discuss the function of Shakespearean Clown.

21. Shakespeare's Use of the Supernatural.

1. Discuss the use of supernatural as a dramatic device by Shakespeare.

22. A General Estimate of Shakespeare.

1. 'Shakespeare lived a life of allegory; his works are the comment on it.' Discuss.
2. "No particular feeling or order of feeling prevails in him it cannot be said of him that he is an amorous poet like Petrarch, a desperately sad poet like Leopardi, or heroic like Humer.' Comment on the universality of Shakespeare.
3. 'Every element in Shakespeare's drama might thus, in isolation, be matched by the best of the contemporary writers for the stage at their best.' What then is the distinction in Shakespeare?

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